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The Circular to Wesleyan Methodists

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# The Circular

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

TO

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. VIII.

31ST AUGUST, 1830.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

### CASE OF MR. GEORGE RAWLINS, LATE A LEADER, STEWARD AND TRUSTEE, IN THE SHEFFIELD CIRCUIT.

IN No. III. of this publication, we presented our readers with a strong and arbitrary display of ministerial misrule and oppression in the "case of Mr. Russell, leader and local preacher in the London East Circuit," who had the temerity to publish his "thoughts" on a matter in which he and every other official person connected with that society were deeply interested; but as those "thoughts" were not in accordance with the views and personal interests of the preachers in that circuit, this was deemed by them a sufficient reason for his suspension from office in the first place, and subsequently for his expulsion from membership in the body; all which was effected without the concurrence of the leaders' meeting, contrary to the concessions of 1797. In the same number was also commenced an account of transactions in Chester, which for their unconstitutionality, and the violence with which they were effected, might have been deemed truly astonishing, were it not that such displays of unchristian power and authority are, alas! in the present day but too common, and all emanating from the same spirit and design on the part of those preachers, who have shown that in their estimation nothing is so much deserving of their disapproval and reprobation as the sin of Christian independence, so often designated by them as disaffection and rebellion. A confirmation, if any were necessary, of these remarks may be found in No. V. of this periodical, in the Wigan case, exhibiting, as it does, a series of oppressive acts towards an individual of thirty years standing in the society; and all for no other crime apparently than giving offence to the superintendent, by noticing to him, as he had an undoubted right to do, what he considered as unconstitutional in his conduct, in reference to the manner in which he admitted a certain individual as a member of society, and expelled another, contrary to the provisions of Methodist rule on such matters. There can be little doubt that many other equally unjust and oppressive cases have occurred in other places, where official individuals have had sufficient independence and courage to attack in their places in the meetings of which they may be members, the growing evils which mark the Methodism of the present day. Various reasons might be assigned why such cases have not been presented to the eye of the Methodist public. Men of retired habits often feel a disinclination to obtrude

themselves on public notice, even where ability may be possessed sufficient to give such statements with clearness and precision, so as to meet with general acceptance from those most interested in such matters; and in other cases, it is very likely that where the inclination may have existed, a consciousness of inability to do it with acceptability may have operated to prevent it.

We would affectionately invite any of our brethren who may have suffered in any way in consequence of their opposition to measures which are deplored by every true Methodist, to cause such matters to be forwarded to us, assuring them that cases of the nature alluded to (when properly attested, agreeably to the standing note at the head of this publication) will meet with a speedy insertion in the 'Circular,' and will doubtless have an effect beyond any other means which they could employ, of putting a speedy end to all such arbitrary and unconstitutional proceedings. It affords us no pleasure, we can assure our numerous readers, to exhibit such cases to their view: deeply do we lament the existence of such, and heartily glad shall we be to know that our exertions have contributed to check the growth of despotism in our body, and to cause those who minister in holy things, to act at all times towards their brethren with that Christian courtesy, and disposition to meet their views in every possible way, which should ever mark the conduct of a minister of Jesus Christ towards those whom he is set over in the Lord.

We do not doubt that there may have been individuals in office, who have not acted with all that wisdom and prudence which are desirable: our object is not to justify such individuals, but principally to point out the agreement or disagreement of the measures adopted by the preachers, with the Methodist constitution.

Just before our last publication went to press, a pamphlet came to our hands, containing a detailed statement of the case of Mr. George Rawlins of Sheffield, written in a very perspicuous manner, and interspersed with exceedingly appropriate remarks; we have not room to insert the whole of this statement, as contained in the pamphlet alluded to, but shall make such extracts as will serve to shew to our brethren the manner in which another official individual of the connexion has been treated, and the cause of such treatment, all serving, we think, to justify our preceding remarks, and calculated to arouse every lover of Christian liberty to watch with a godly jealousy the move-

ments of those who appear disposed to cramp the energies of that liberty, by placing on it such fetters as Protestant Christians of the present day will not see even attempted, without offering to all such attempts a determined and uncompromising resistance, and which sooner or later must be successful.

It appears that Mr. Rawlins was amongst the number of those who were highly dissatisfied with the conduct of the preachers in the Leeds affair, and their subsequent transactions arising therefrom;—this dissatisfaction was expressed in an address to the Conference of 1823, which received his signature, and that of several other official individuals in Sheffield. At their quarterly meeting also in September 1828 this subject was mooted, in the discussion of which Mr. R. took an active part, and an address to the Conference of 1829 *unanimously* agreed to. To this address, *being official*, the Conference, it would seem, condescended to reply. This reply, which Mr. R. states was the reverse of being satisfactory, was read in the September quarterly Meeting, 1829, in which meeting, Mr. R. took occasion to animadvert on that famous article in the minutes of that year, which is headed “Discipline of the Connexion,” “and solemnly protested against the anti-scriptural power, and inherent rights now assumed by the preachers.” This account of Mr. R.’s conduct will be sufficient to shew the gravamen of his offence, and the naughtiness of his conduct, and will prepare the reader for the sequel of the story.

“Some weeks afterwards,” says Mr. R. “a preacher and two of the leaders called upon and informed me that they were deputed at the leaders’ meeting, to visit and try to restore me to confidence in Methodism. Upon my stating that I was not afraid of meeting either friend or “enemy in the gate,” and that I was prepared to answer any charges that could possibly be brought against me, they distinctly said, *there were no charges*: but the superintendent had felt his mind aggrieved by hearing that Mr. Sigston had been at my house, and consequently that my attachment to Methodism was questionable. I referred them to more than twenty-three years official service in the society, and fearlessly challenged them to produce one single act of *unfaithfulness*, or impropriety during the whole period of my connexion with it, now almost thirty years. A long conversation, of little consequence, was concluded by my recommending the parties to be equally faithful and consistent with myself, and especially that the superintendent, and *some* of his colleagues should cease to agitate the society, or slander their peaceable absent brethren, and all begin to preach and pray more than they had ever done, as the most effectual means to ensure peace and prosperity in our borders. On the following day I received an official summons to attend the next leaders’ meeting, which I accordingly did.

“On that occasion the superintendent opened the business in a long and laboured harangue, intimating that designing men were attempting to injure or destroy “the work of God,” and made some observations on the importance and necessity of union, the dreadful sin and awful consequences of schism, &c. &c.; his remarks all tending to excite alarm and suspicion in the minds of the brethren, and induce them to look upon me as a most disaffected and dangerous person, who was engaged in a conspiracy to subvert Methodism. I challenged proof, and called for definite charges, but was answered by questions, such as the following. “Have you withheld any part of your contributions to the Conference funds? Will you continue to recommend the Southwark address, and other publications on that subject? Are you a proprietor, or reader, of that infamous publication, the *Protestant Magazine*? Did you pass the door of Carver-street Chapel when the people were assembling for the love-feast, and can you justify your absence on that occasion?” (I had been called, and was going to visit a dying person,—this was seven months previous.) Although distinct answers to these questions were demanded in a vapouring and highly authoritative tone, I did not immediately choose to reply to them; but some of my remarks on these subjects will be found in a subsequent part of this address. Tests and pledges of my fidelity were then suggested and proposed, when I repeated the challenge given to the deputation the preceding week, and was again informed that *there were NO CHARGES!*

“Some of the most respectable members of the meeting bore une-

quivocal testimonies, highly honourable to my character, and appealed to the brethren present, whether the conduct of any individual, belonging to the society, had been more uniformly consistent than my own: this could not be denied, and was fully admitted by all who spoke.

“The superintendent contended, that having in the quarterly meeting publicly objected to the decision of the preachers on the Leeds case, &c. and moreover countenanced such a man as Mr. Sigston, I was therefore suspected of disaffection to Methodism; and he broadly intimated that I was unworthy of holding office, and ought to be removed, unless I would suppress my sentiments, and renounce my acquaintance with such men, and formally pledge myself cordially to co-operate with the Conference, and support the preachers in every possible way with influence and property as heretofore, according to the rules (not of 1797, which I was willing to do, but) as published in the minutes of 1828 and 1829, as explained in the Leeds case. As I was not disposed to yield unqualified submission to these requirements, the attention of the meeting was occupied till nearly midnight, in listening to perverted statements and insinuating remarks, obviously intended not to elicit *truth*, but to prejudice the brethren against me, when a motion, “That this brother be removed from his office as a leader,” was moved by an individual, but fell to the ground for want of being seconded. There was not another *preacher* besides the chairman present. Here the matter ought in all fairness to have ended; but notwithstanding this defeat and failure, I was then ordered to attend the next leaders’ meeting on my return from an intended journey; this was in five weeks afterwards.

In the course of these proceedings I took the liberty of asking the superintendent whether he would abide by the decision of the meeting, provided it should be in my favour; but instead of a satisfactory reply, he indignantly (but perhaps unwittingly) informed me, that I was brought there to *ANSWER*, not to *ask insulting questions*!

“I stated that my reason for proposing the question was not to insult any one, but to save time and needless discussion. For if he was predetermined to exercise the authority now assumed by the preachers, which I had sufficient reason to believe he was, why trouble me or the meeting about the matter. To have deposed me at once would have been far more honourable, though looking no farther than the judgment of mortals, less safe than the unhallowed measures subsequently adopted.

“On the fourteenth of December, the second meeting at which I was arraigned, numerous ensnaring questions were again proposed, some of which had been previously prepared in writing, but I was not allowed to obtain a copy; many others were added, and often artfully changed and variously modified, on the spur of the moment, to answer the intended purpose; all involving the same insidious principle, and manifestly aiming at the same results,—namely, to beguile the meeting by a specious show of candour, and at the same time, to perplex and entangle me by extorting some expression which might be construed into self-accusation. A peremptory order was given, but not fully obeyed, that my answer to those questions should be restricted to a simple *aye* or *no*: the framers and proposers well knowing, that to some of these I could not give an affirmative without sin, or a negative without danger. After being thus tested about an hour and a half, I was told by the superintendent, ‘If you have any thing to offer in your own defence now is the time to say it, and then (*I suppose*) withdraw, that the brethren may be at liberty to discuss the subject freely, and dispose of the case.’ But as I did not obey this *demi-mandate*, which would doubtless have been a *full toned* one, if he had been supported, an intimation was given that I was not to be allowed to interfere in the subsequent proceedings, and I was actually called to order by the chairman, because I ventured to contradict some palpable falsehoods, obviously intended to injure my cause. The exposure of these quibbles, however, added to the remarks of those brethren who only dared to speak in my defence, tended so much to counteract the unfavourable impression meant to be produced by fallacious statements, and contemptible sophistry, that my opponents deemed it prudent to postpone the decision of the question for my expulsion, although they had previously managed, by the most deceptive trickery to entrap the unsuspecting brethren, and to carry another motion investing the superintendent with absolute power, so that he could thence remove me at pleasure, upon this concession, without any further sanction. All the subsequent disgraceful proceeding was consequently mere pretence, and quite unnecessary, except for the purpose of furnishing a cloak to cover the superintendent from the consciously merited and dreaded penalty of public censure. One of the party now moved and another seconded an adjournment to the following week, and thus the meeting concluded after midnight.

“The conditions required of me so far as they were developed,

were, 1st. That I should ask pardon, and promise not to offend in future. 2nd. That I should pledge myself to yield passive submission and unfeigned obedience to the Conference. 3rd. Cordial co-operation with the preachers in supporting their claims (not according to the rules of pacification in 1795, and concessions of 1797, which I was willing to do, but,) agreeably to the minutes of 1828 and 1829, as practically explained in the Leeds case. 4th. That I should continue my utmost exertions, and contributions, of influence and property as heretofore. 5th. That I should renounce my intercourse with any of the Wesleyan Protestants with whom I might be acquainted, and cease to read or recommend any of their publications, or to speak on the prohibited subject. I do not mean that these requirements were proposed exactly in this order and connexion, or precisely in these terms, but they are substantially correct, as repeatedly expressed by one person or another, in the course of these proceedings.

"The third and last meeting at which I was *present*, was on the 21st Dec., but there were several others held on the same subject, both public, and I believe private also. As the week preceding Christmas is a time when the manufacturers and workmen of Sheffield are more closely occupied in their various avocations than at any other period of the year, many of the leaders were unavoidably absent, and others, I believe, were either intimidated or disgusted with those arbitrary proceedings, and did not attend. All the preachers, however, with their *faithful* adherents, and as many of their deluded devotees as they could manage to muster, were present on the occasion. Having *no charge* to prefer against me, the business was commenced by reading the questions and answers of the preceding meeting, as a basis for discussion, in order, if possible, to *obtain a verdict without one*. To some of these I objected as incorrect, and not expressing my sentiments, or the answers which I had given.

"To prevent mistakes of this kind, one of the lay brethren, at my special request, had been appointed by the preceding meeting as secretary to enter the whole. I therefore appealed to that brother, whether the minute as now read, was so written by himself, and was both surprised and disappointed by his replying, 'that perceiving Mr. Cubit engaged in writing the minutes, he had thought it unnecessary to write them also.' Some of the brethren, however, *thought* Mr. C.'s minute now read by him was correct, and my objection was set aside. Perhaps the preachers' own construction suited their purpose better than mine would have done; or the document now read, being a copy of the originals which were written on loose scraps of paper, and in some cases repeatedly altered, errors might possibly have occurred in transcribing or otherwise. Be that as it may, my opinion was not admissible inasmuch as it was not in accordance with what was *recorded* as my sentiments on the former evening, and as the transcriber could have no inducement to make any alteration, some significant insinuations were made by him to guard the meeting against being deluded by any secret designs of mine!

"Taking this as a sample of what I had to expect from such men, I felt no disposition to waste time or breath in unavailing efforts to defend the truth, but contented myself with requesting that I might not again be detained till after midnight, and distinctly informed the meeting, that when my persecutors had wearied themselves in their attempts to criminate, I should, in conclusion, claim the right of an Englishman to be heard in my own defence. The chairman pledged himself that 'I should be allowed as much time for my defence as I chose to occupy.' Relying on this promise, I suffered mis-statements, insinuations, and falsehoods to pass without exposure, during the subsequent proceedings.

"After employing all the various expedients that invention could furnish, or sophistry supply, to vilify and to make me appear odious:—and also to intimidate or beguile the meeting, and work upon the feelings of the brethren, in order to influence their decision,—a motion for my 'removal from office' was brought forward by the individual before alluded to—when, an amendment, 'That brother Rawlins has not forfeited the confidence of the leaders, nor deserved such treatment,' was moved and seconded by two of the most respectable, and oldest local preachers and leaders present, and ably supported. But instead of impartially discharging his duty as a chairman, by putting this question to be decided simply upon its own merits by the meeting, Mr. Saml. Jackson expressly declared, 'THE MOTION (amendment) WAS A LIE!'—and that, '*he would have no milk and water measures.*' He not only declined to put the amendment, but the brethren who were supporting it were repeatedly and rudely clamoured down, and finally silenced by himself. After much labour and pains to remove the effect produced by the interference of my friends, some of whom again attempted to speak, but were silenced by the chairman, the motion to depose me was again called for,—but previous to the question being put, I claimed the right to be heard in my own defence. It was now past midnight. My claim was objected to, my

right was disputed, and my attempt to speak was violently opposed. My application to, and expostulation with the chairman, after some time, was coarsely answered by—'go on Sir.' Unaccustomed to such rudeness as that which had characterized the conduct of my opposers, or to address a disorderly assembly, I had previously prepared an outline of my intended remarks, written in a memorandum book, in which I had also noted the minutes of these proceedings. I had scarcely entered upon my defence before I was interrupted by one of the preachers, and the individual before referred to, who laid their heads together and now insisted that I should not be allowed to proceed, unless I would pledge myself to give up the written document to the meeting, as soon as I had finished my remarks! My appeal to the chairman for protection was answered by—'If what you have to say be a remedy for this state of agitation in the society, you may go on, if not I shall call you to order.' Although I had frequently assisted in finding such remedies heretofore, I stated that I stood there on that occasion, not to find *him* a remedy for agitations and evils of *his own creating*, but to defend myself against slanderous insinuation and falsehood. I again attempted to proceed in my defence, but was rudely interrupted by vehement clamour from the opposing party, whose virulence throughout these proceedings, and indecorous conduct at this time, was such as only to excite pity or disgust, and in my judgment was a disgrace to their character as *men*, much more as persons professing christianity, and such as I never before had witnessed.

"Thus was I virtually, and in fact *actually* denied the privilege of a criminal at the bar of his country, convicted of a capital offence! My persecutors well knew that if I was permitted to speak, and allowed a patient hearing, their purpose would be totally defeated. But although both myself and friends were debarred the liberty of speaking, yet the chairman did not fail to renew *his* oft repeated warnings and injunctions, and previous to putting the question solemnly charged the brethren,—if they had any respect for him—any desire for the peace of the society,—any regard for themselves, their children, or for Methodism—or any love for the *cause of God*, now to do their duty, and put an end to this dreadful state of agitation, by *removing the cause*,—*purgimg* the society, &c. and concluded his pathetic address by putting the question, when there appeared to be a majority for the motion.

"From the hostile spirit manifested by the superintendent, and his unceasing endeavours, since the September quarterly meeting, to excite prejudice, and injure my character in public estimation, and also from explicit declarations from himself and his coadjutors, it was self-evident that he was fully determined upon my removal, whatever might be the result of the present decision of the leaders. Impressed with this conviction, I had prepared the following declaration and protest, which I then read, amidst much tumult by my opponents.

"For many years I have esteemed it a privilege to be a member of the Methodist society, and during 23 of that period have sustained the responsibility of being a member of the leaders' meeting in Sheffield. In addition to the office of leader, it has been my lot to be called to discharge the duties of poor steward, town steward, and circuit steward repeatedly, and steward also for Ebenezer chapel; and am at this time trustee for Carver-street, Norfolk-street, Ebenezer, Bridgehouses, Attercliffe, and Thurgoland chapels, and responsible for all the debts connected with those chapels.

"As an official character in the Methodist connexion, I felt it my duty to make myself acquainted with the constitution of Methodism, as settled by the Conference and delegates from the people in 1795 and 1797.

"For some years past I have observed a manifest disposition on the part of certain influential preachers, to encroach upon the rights and privileges of the people; and in the recent transactions at Leeds, which have been sanctioned by Conference, there has been in my judgment, a wanton and unjust violation of the mutual compact contained in the plan of pacification.

"For entertaining these sentiments, and endeavouring to support the constitution of Methodism, and not for violating any one of its laws, nor for committing a single act which the Bible prohibits, I have been dragged forwards by the superintendent and others, to be interrogated with an evident design to induce (what was not likely to be accomplished where there was no guilt,) self-crimination, in a manner totally at variance with British jurisprudence, and never practised, I believe, except in the Romish Inquisition, and by Methodist preachers and their tools.

"During these shameful proceeding, I have repeatedly demanded a specification of charges, if any could be preferred against me, but all to no purpose. My opponents have explicitly and repeatedly disclaimed entertaining even the most remote idea of any moral delinquency, and with all their efforts and ingenuity they have not been

able to produce *one single charge* of any violation of Methodistic rule against me. And because I could not surrender my judgment and conscience to the unconstitutional and anti-scriptural assumption of priestly domination, I have been expelled from office in the Methodist Society.

Against such illegal and unrighteous proceedings, I do hereby most solemnly protest, and shall now adopt such measures for my own vindication, and in defence of Christian liberty, as on mature deliberation, may be deemed expedient.

‘December 21st, 1829.

‘GEO. RAWLINS.’

“To this paper I then added my signature, delivered it to the superintendent, requested the vestry door to be opened, which had been locked at an early period of the meeting by one of the preachers, to prevent the desertion of their wearied partisans, and left the meeting.

“Thus, after devoting the best part of my life in the support of Methodism, and diligently serving the society and Conference to the utmost extent of my ability, in every possible way, and with acknowledged fidelity, having received as many testimonies of public approbation, as any official member in Sheffield, I am now, at the instigation of the agents of Conference, to be cut off from my Christian associates, branded as an outcast with the broad mark of ecclesiastical reprobation, and held up to public gaze as an object of pity, contempt, or derision. Such is modern Methodism!”

#### THE CHURCH GOVERNMENT OF WESLEYAN METHODISM.

(Continued from page 54 of our last Circular.)

V. The constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, of which we have treated in our two preceding numbers, is not destitute of those securities and guarantees, which are essential to its preservation and perpetuity.

To have been gradually formed,—the result of long and tried experience;—to have braved the shocks of early conflicting parties and hostile interests;—to have been publicly recognized and solemnly ratified,—to have become universally established in practice;—to have cradled the opinions and formed the habits of successive generations;—and to comprise within itself such a balance of interests, and such a range of counteracting principles, as shall operate to check any undue preponderance, and prevent the interests of one party from permanently outweighing and overturning those of other portions of the community;—these are amongst the principal securities which can be given to any constitutional form of government. All these securities (and if the question should be viewed in a scriptural light, still higher securities) are to be found in the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism.

1. Platonic theories of government, founded on speculation and fancy, have seldom benefitted mankind, because they have seldom harmonized with the actual condition of human nature; and have, therefore, been found altogether inapplicable to human affairs. Hence the almost hopeless difficulty of giving at once a constitution to a new people, and the absolute necessity that every state should work out its own constitution as the conjoint result of wisdom and of experience through the lapse of years. Such is the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism. We have already stated that it was not the result of premeditated scheme or preconceived system. Its fundamental principles developed themselves in actual operation, and under circumstances of urgency and necessity, which at once established their propriety and fitness. Under a *divine* impulse the work proceeded step by step; but every step discovered some new principle which was adopted under the like necessity, and approved itself by the consistency and harmony of its operation in the general system. Under the experienced eye of Mr. Wesley, but often in defiance of all his prejudices and prepossessions, the constitution

was thus gradually formed. For upwards of fifty years from its commencement, he lived to superintend and consolidate it. We have seen to what maturity it had grown at his death. In its infancy he had reared and nursed it with solicitude and care; in rising youth he had strengthened it by his counsels and shielded it with his authority. But so far from committing it to any other foster-father at his death, his own peculiar right of interference could not have been much longer endured. Sound, healthy and vigorous, this offspring of superior wisdom must soon have burst the leading strings, and have presented itself as no longer a pliant sapling craving support against the rocking of the storm, but as a pillar of strength on which the Church itself might safely rest.

2. We were about to add, that this constitution was solemnly ratified by the Conference on Mr. Wesley's decease. So much should seem to be implied in their engagement “to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left them at his death.” But it was necessary that the strength of the constitution should be early displayed. The Conference, instead of fully acknowledging that which gave them all their strength and importance, fought against it for nearly seven years! And, what is still more singular, is, that men of all parties in the Conference, and of principles the most opposite, concurred to set aside the constitution. The episcopal party, defeated in their first attempt to rule the preachers, by the plan which Mr. Thompson had proposed for supplying, by district committees, the place of Mr. Wesley, during the intervals of Conference, attacked that very plan on the ground that, although it provided for the trial and removal of travelling preachers, it made no provision for the settlement of disputes and agitations amongst the people. With this party indeed, this became at the time the hacknied objection to Mr. Thompson's plan, and the pretext for the Lichfield meeting; and it was the cause, doubtless, of those curious and, in some instances, *unexplained* appointments which follow in the minutes of several succeeding Conferences, and which, under this pretence, the party had the address to procure.

Mr. Thompson's party, who, from their submitting only to the elective and temporary distinctions of *office*, and admitting no *order* in the ministry superior to that of travelling preacher, may be denominated the Presbyterian party, having secured liberty for themselves, would readily enough have extended the power of district meetings to local affairs and to the trial of local officers and members; but, in the *first* place, these powers were already in the hands of the local meetings, and this was not a time to make so dangerous an experiment: and, *secondly*, this was not what the *prelatical* party desired. They preferred to throw discredit on district committees, and to push forward individuals to posts of distinction and authority; hoping, thereby, to accustom both the Conference and the connexion to a species of individual authority, which should pave the way for American Wesleyan Episcopacy. Whatever difficulties or disputes arose, instead of calling upon the district committees or their chairman, the Conference appointed individuals, generally unconnected with the district, to interfere and treat with the parties in dispute; and these individuals were pompously thanked for their great services.

“The Conference return their sincere thanks to Dr. Coke, Mr. Mather, and Mr. Pawson, for their great labours in serving the connexion; and unanimously

"request them to continue in their offices; and appoint them to attend the next meeting of the delegates at Manchester, for the stationing of the preachers."—*Min. of Conference, 1794.*

What services these individuals had rendered the connexion, and what offices they held, (for they are none of them included in the list of chairmen of districts for that year) does not appear. But they were *peace-makers*, and undertook to settle disputes in the connexion. The next year, 1795, the Conference had to treat with the delegates, and agreed to the plan of pacification. But in the following year,

"Mr. Mather was nominated to go to Macclesfield, in order to settle the disputes, and if possible *heal the breach* which had been made in that society."

"Mr. Mather and Mr. Pawson were also appointed to go to Bristol," on a similar errand.—*Min. of Conf. 1796.*

Now what is chiefly to be observed here, is, that in all these *local* disputes, the district committees and their chairmen are never called upon to interfere. But, as in the Bristol case, the Conference directed "that the secretary should write to the trustees proposing a meeting "between them and such as the Conference should appoint "to settle the present dispute."—*Min. of Conf. 1796.* And the preachers so appointed were invested with no powers to *try, suspend, or expel*, but merely to *treat, to settle, and to heal*; and were not at all connected officially with the disturbed district. There cannot be a stronger proof in support of the main argument of the London South address to the Conference of 1828, viz. "that by the constitution of Methodism, *travelling preachers alone* are amenable to special district meetings; and that the application of the inquisitorial and judicial powers of such meetings to officers and members of our societies is a novel and unauthorized extension of their jurisdiction."—*Address, p. 5.*

The love of liberty in the great body of the preachers, and their determination to maintain their independence, frustrated all the efforts of the episcopal party; and the detection and exposure of their Chester and Litchfield schemes completely overturned them, as a party. We wish their history had proved more instructive, not only to a similar party in the present day, but also to the preachers in general, whose duty it is to watch this party. When men are seen to magnify themselves in office;—when chairmanships, and clerkships, and secretaryships, are made the pretext for ascending platforms, and setting their feet upon the heads of their less secular and more spiritual brethren;—when all their powers are pushed to the uttermost, and their mighty deeds emblazoned in printed resolutions and votes of thanks; and, when every new election furnishes the pretext for a new list of presidents, to be appended to the Minutes of Conference, and a new portrait for the January Magazine, we may be sure that the worthy agents are not seeking the lowest seats in the synagogue, and that they will prove very dangerous friends to the liberties of the connexion.

And forasmuch as in constitutional states, a constitutional opposition is of some importance, we were not displeased to observe in the Minutes traces of the jealousy and suspicion with which these early parties watched each other. Mr. Thompson's party, afraid lest some trick should be played in a thin house, procured the following enactment:

"In order that all the preachers may be perfectly easy

"respecting our form of government, it is agreed that no change shall be made in this, unless first proposed and agreed to in full Conference."—*Min. of Conf. 1795.*

The next year, however, the Episcopal party, not wishing to be tied up too closely, and in order to come up with their opponents, decree as follows,

"Whoever leave the Conference before the business is all finished, and the journals signed, must not complain, "whatever may be done after their departure" (*Min. of Conf. 1796.*) This was a genteel way of avoiding a regular notice, and leaving it open to take advantage of any opportunity that might present itself of defeating their opponents behind their backs.

A third party there was, weak within the walls of Conference, but strong out of doors, who quarrelled with the constitution because it was not sufficiently democratic to suit their tastes. Methodism, extending her arms to embrace the outcasts of society, and receiving them chiefly from the highways and hedges, necessarily placed them under discipline. She therefore committed to those who came under her fostering care no voice in the management of Church affairs, until they became sufficiently instructed and informed to be of some service to others. Having provided, as stated in the commencement of this article, "ample scope for the employment of all the local talents and enterprise which might be found in the circuits and societies," it was thought, (to use the language of the authors of the *Reply to Watson,*) "that it would be no advantage to Methodism that every new convert, or awakened person, who might be just beginning to direct his attention to spiritual things, should be called to decide upon the important concerns of the Church, which frequently demand the most serious deliberation of wisdom and experience." "If any man were found to possess spiritual gifts or qualifications to serve the secular offices of the Church, so long as Methodism continued what it had been, the Church would not be slow in appointing such a man to office. He would thus rise by his talents and piety, to a station which ought to give him, and which according to our view of the Methodist constitution does give him a right to vote on every question affecting the interests of that society and circuit to which he belongs" *Reply to Watson, p. 142.*

The above, however, was by no means sufficient for the democratic party of 1797. This party, therefore, bolder in enterprise and more resolute in the execution of design, separated themselves with Mr. Kilham and several other preachers at their head. They formed what is denominated "The New Connexion;" and, after the early death of Mr. Kilham, were chiefly indebted to the strong understanding and practical wisdom of Mr. Thom, for the consistency and stability given to their new institutions. The worst we have to say of this party is, that we wish they had remained with us. Jealous of public liberty, and keenly alive to the interests of the people, they would not have allowed the societies and the circuits to slumber on the bare faith of treaties, until the very terms of those treaties had been almost forgotten, and until new factions in the Conference had well nigh overturned them. Every new encroachment would have been promptly noticed, and every stretch of ministerial power would have been instantly resisted. We should then, in all probability, never have heard of the Leeds Special District Meeting; and have known nothing of the conflicts and controversies which now agitate the connexion. Opposite principles,

however, may yet work evil effects under the constitution of the New Connexion, which, after all its advantages, we cannot envy.

Other parties and other conflicts, like the whirls and eddies which play on the less agitated sides of a great river, contributed to the distractions of the connexion after the death of Mr. Wesley. These, however, having exercised no general or extended influence, are not of importance to attract the eye of the historian, and are lost in the interest excited by the great parties to which we have al-luded.

Now we invite the attention of our correspondent L, and of every reflecting man who feels an interest in the present state of our connexion, to the fact that the constitution, as it had already been established in practice even during Mr. Wesley's life, rose superior to all these opposing interests and contending parties. The pillar and strength of all our institutions, it reared its head in 1797, like another Sinai, and, imposing silence on the restless factions who sought to envelope it in the cloud and vapour of their strifes, it uttered, *in express terms*, that law, the principles of which had been so gradually, but firmly, interwoven in our whole economy. The treaty of 1797 was what none of the leading parties in the Conference desired, or would willingly have admitted. But the connexion could not have been preserved without it. It confirmed to the people their long established rights and usages; it harmonized with their habits and feelings; and it at once imparted peace to all the borders of our Israel,—a peace which can hardly be said to have been interrupted, until now that a new generation has grown up, comparatively ignorant of this great charter of their liberties; and until new factions in the Conference, destitute of wisdom and of experience, have the temerity to assail it.

Can that constitution be destitute of securities, we ask, which has been thus gradually formed, and closely interwoven in all our institutions; which in 1797 achieved such signal triumphs; and which then approved itself to the hearts and wishes of the immense majority of the people, and was so justly hailed as the harbinger of peace and prosperity for many succeeding years. If it were strong anterior to 1797 when resting solely on usage and practice often controverted and denied, it surely became stronger when embodied in the terms of a formal treaty, and publicly recognized and established on the plighted faith of all parties, in the Conference and amongst the people. Has then the constitution lost any of that internal strength, or of those additional securities which were given to it in 1797? Assuredly it has not; and if the dominant party in the Conference who now assail this constitution have the slightest chance of success, such success can only be temporary, and must arise not from any deficiency of security in the constitution itself, but in the degeneracy and torpor of the people, who may not justly appreciate its worth. Of this, however, there is little prospect. The people are awaking from their slumber; light is spreading amongst them; and they are not yet prepared to give up the constitution of 1797.

3. The adoption and ratification of this constitution was as solemn, and the engagement to observe and comply with it as binding, as language and the faith of religious men, and ministers of the gospel, could possibly make it. In connexion with recent acts of the Conference, we now turn to it with feelings of melancholy; and as we read it, we cannot suppress the exclamation, "Lord, what is man!"

The following copy is literally transcribed from the Minutes of Conference for 1797. We have added the names of the 145 preachers who subscribed this document, because those names were the original guarantees of our liberties. Every preacher, indeed, who has since entered the connexion, is equally bound, because he entered under engagements equally solemn to observe these laws.

"Whereas, we, the undersigned, have, on this and the preceding day, carefully revised the rules drawn up and left us by our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our large minutes, to which we consented when we were admitted, and by which we were regulated during his life: And whereas we have collected together those rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others, to which we have no objection, we do now VOLUNTARILY and in GOOD FAITH, sign our names, as approving of, and engaging to comply with the aforesaid collection of rules, or code of laws, GOD being our helper.\*

Thomas Coke, *President*; Samuel Bradburn, *Secretary*; William Thompson, Alexander Mather, John Pawson, Joseph Benson, Thomas Warwick, Thomas Taylor, John Crook, Joseph Algar, Joseph Bradford, Isaac Brown, Lancelot Harrison, Christopher Hopper, John Barber, Robert Hopkins, Jeremiah Brettell, Robert Johnson, William Percival, William Myles, William West, Edward Jackson, George Gibbon, James Wood, Thomas Rutherford, Henry Moore, Benjamin Rhodes, John Pritchard, Joseph Taylor, James Rogers, John Moon, Daniel Jackson, Thomas Rogerson, James M'Byron, Parson Greenwood, James Anderson, Jonathan Cousins, Robert Roberts, Zechariah Yewdal, Thomas Cooper, William Horner, John King, Thomas Carlill, Thomas Longley, George Button, George Sargent, William Warrener, Samuel Bardsley, George Holder, Joseph Pescod, Jonathan Brown, John Goodwin, Joseph Saunderson, Samuel Botts, John Brice, George Highfield, Charles Kyte, Thomas Vasey, John Stamp, John Kershaw, Charles Gloyne, George Dermott, John Ogilvie, Owen Davies, Walter Griffith, John Beaumont, James Penman, William Jenkins, Anthony Seckerson, William Shelmerdine, Thomas Gill, Joseph Harper, John Boyle, William Simpson, Thomas Dixon, Samuel Taylor, John Gaultier, William Heath, John Crosby, Simon Day, Lawrence Kane, Thomas Wood, Thomas Hutton, James Buckley, Isaac Muff, John Foster, John Barrit, Cleland Kirkpatrick, Thomas Parsons, John Clark, William Blagborne, Thomas Yates, John Riles, Joseph Entwistle, Joseph Sutcliffe, William Stevens, John Woodrow, Edmund Shaw, George Baldwin, Jonathan Parkin, James M'Donald, Jonathan Crowther, Samuel Gates, Matthew Lumb, Thomas Shaw, William Saunderson, John Wilshaw, John Furness, Miles Martindale, Robert Smith, sen. Francis West, John Booth, William Thom, Booth Newton, William Harrison, Edward Gibbon, James Hall, Thomas Bartholomew, Jonathan Edmondson, Theophilus Lessey, Isaac Lilly, John Nelson, Robert Lomas, Jonathan Barker, Thomas Simmonite, Joseph Drake, Charles Atmore, John Ashall, William Bramwell, Jasper Robinson, George Whitfield, Timothy Crowther, John Allen, George Snowden, Henry Taylor, Joseph Cole, James Scholefield, James Watson, Michael Emmett, Robert Miller, David Barrowclough, Andrew Mayor, George Sykes, Richard Hardaker, Richard Reece.

In the above names full security was thought to have been found. Whatever odium from the world might be cast on the character of a Methodist preacher, by their own people they were regarded as the angels of God. It was deemed impossible that any good man could "voluntarily, and in good faith," set his name to a formal covenant, with the solemn adjuration, "so help me God!" and then, in the face of Heaven, and in the face of the connexion, trample on that covenant. This was truly deemed impossible! It could not be! Security therefore was really found in the above names, so long as the old men and fathers retained their influence in the Conference. It was not until after the Conference of 1814, when Mr. Thompson's law for filling up the HUNDRED, by *seniority*, was broken through, and until the Zebedean party came

into power, that the faith of the Methodist Conference became *punic*, and the obligations of the most solemn treaties were slightly regarded.

(To be concluded in our next.)

\* The following important observations on the above declarations have appeared in the last edition of the *Reply to Watson*, pp. 18—21.

"In the above declaration it is evident that two distinct classes of laws are alluded to. The *first* was a revision of the large minutes published by Mr. Wesley, to which the preachers consented when admitted members of the Conference, and by which *THEY* were governed during his life. The *second* was a collection of rules believed to be essential to Methodism, (such of the old rules, relating to the societies, &c. as were retained in the treaty with the delegates) as well as others (the new stipulations introduced by that treaty) to which the Conference had no objection. This distinction is very important. With the large minutes the local officers and members are not concerned. They form no part of the *concessions* of 1797; but were separately published, for the use of the preachers; who alone 'consented to them when they were admitted.' It is the *second* 'Collection of Rules or Code of Laws, published with the Rules of Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members,' which formed the subject of treaty between the Conference and the delegates of 1797; and which, therefore, constitutes the only basis of law, by which the societies and local officers are, or can be, bound.

"This clear and obvious distinction between these two classes of laws, arises necessarily out of the relation, subsisting between Methodism, and her Conference; and the particular constitution of the latter assembly. The Conference itself is a voluntary association; but such an association implies the right of the general body to dictate, and enforce its own terms of union, on all its members. Hence arises the *legislative* power of the Conference over its own members—the preachers; and that particular class of laws comprised in what are termed 'The Large Minutes.' It is singular, however, and worthy of remark, that in the deed poll of the 28th Feb. 1784, by which Mr. Wesley declared the members and defined the powers of the Conference, he makes no direct mention of any legislative authority as vested in that assembly. This power, of course, (to the extent we have mentioned, but no further) is implied in several of the clauses of that deed; but a standing legislative authority in the church of God was no very favourite notion with Mr. Wesley. A few plain and simple rules, the obvious dictates of prudence and common sense, were all that he deemed necessary. Such rules he had provided for the Conference and the connexion; and his constant observation to the preachers was, "*our rules do not want mending but keeping.*"

"On the other hand, the connexion between the Conference and the societies is also voluntary. Consent of both parties, *express* or *implied*, is of the very essence of such a connexion. The scriptural authority of a Christian minister over the people of his charge is out of the question here. Even in that case the minister has no *legislative* authority; his right is simply to maintain and enforce the laws of Christ. He who would impose any other law upon his people, and especially against their consent, is not a minister of Jesus Christ. Mr. Wesley himself could have no right to make laws and enforce rules on several hundred thousands of his fellow Christians, *without their consent*. But this consent Mr. Wesley enjoyed, and to an indefinite extent. The consent in this case, indeed, was not *express* but *implied*. Mr. Wesley was authorized by no express treaty; nor was he bound by any *formal* stipulation. For this very reason his power died with him. The consent of the people, that he should legislate for, and rule them, he could neither transfer, nor bequeath to another; for though the people had consented to him, they had not, and, as he himself tells us, *never would* consent to any other. (Wesley's Works, vol. viii. p. 313. Ed. 1829.) This alone is a sufficient answer to that hackneyed absurdity, that 'the Conference derived from Mr. Wesley, the power to rule the Methodist connexion.'

"But to return: The distinction between these two classes of rules—between 'the large minutes' on the one hand, and 'the collection of rules or code of laws' on the other; and their distinct relation, the former to the government of the preachers, and the latter to that of the local officers and societies, is not only thus pointed out by the very language of the above declaration, so solemnly made and signed by the Conference of 1797, but also by the practice therein referred to. The preachers *consented* to these 'large minutes when admitted members of Conference.' Ever since their first publication by Mr. Wesley, the young preachers, when admitted receive a copy of these minutes inscribed as follows, and signed by the president and secretary of the Conference: 'You think it your duty to call sinners to repentance; make full proof thereof, and we shall rejoice to receive you as a fellow labourer.' On the admission of local officers

and members, however, they are not even informed of the existence of these 'large minutes.' As to *members* the rule simply requires, that the rules of the society be given them 'the first time they meet'; and as to *local officers*, they consent to nothing but the rules and usages of the meetings of which they are elected *members*.

"The Conference of 1797 further confirmed this distinction between the large minutes, and the collection of rules, or code of laws, by an act the most unequivocal, and which, beyond all controversy, determines their separate and distinct application. Having 'revised' the former, and 'collected together' the latter, they published them in two *separate* pamphlets. The first of these pamphlets, containing 'the large minutes' revised, they continued to give, inscribed and signed as above, to the young preachers '*when admitted*.' But the second, containing the 'collection of rules, or code of laws,' is expressly stated in an introductory note, to be published '*in execution* of Article vi. of the printed circular, 'for the benefit and convenience of all the members.' This article of the circular, is, in fact, printed at the head of this latter publication; and declares it to contain 'ALL the rules which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings.' And if it contain *ALL* such rules, then the conclusion is inevitable, viz. that the large minutes and their contents do not relate to the local officers and societies, but *exclusively* to the government of the travelling preachers.

"This distinction being of vital importance to the present question, we must further remark, that it is a distinction which has been always observed and maintained. It is distinctly pointed out by Myles, by Crowther, and indeed by every other writer on the constitution of Methodism. Dr. Warren, in his recent digest of the laws of the connexion, lays it down as an acknowledged principle, that 'As the large minutes, published by Mr. Wesley, contain the principles by which the preachers are governed; so the plan of pacification, agreed upon between the preachers and the people in the year 1795, and the subsequent regulations made at Leeds, in the year 1797, constitute a basis of government of the societies:' and so clear and indisputable did the Doctor deem this principle, that he has founded on it the arrangement of his book.

"Now, the *Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797, relating to districts*, are to be found only in the large minutes, revised as above, for the government of the preachers. They are not inserted, nor even referred to, in any shape, directly or indirectly, in the collection of rules or code of laws, for the government of the people. It was the application of these regulations, *relating to districts*, to local officers and members, that constituted the great offence of the Leeds Special District Meeting: and which is the plausible cover of the attempts then made, and still pursued on the part of the Conference to overturn the 'concessions and code laws of 1797,' and to recover to themselves that absolute power over the people which they then so solemnly renounced."

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

Methodism, with all its excellencies and advantages, and these are not few,—Methodism, as it relates to the people, is too credulous. In its founder and his coadjutors it reposed an unlimited confidence. The incessant labours, deep spiritual-mindedness, and utter abhorrence of filthy lucre which these holy men generally discovered, constituted a sufficient pledge for that confidence. They watched over its rising interests, and guided its inexperience with paternal solicitude; while, on the other hand, it yielded to their controul, and submitted to their authority, with true filial affection.

These days are now gone by;—primitive Methodism is no more;—and since the *fathers* fell asleep, *all things do not continue as they were from the beginning*. Within the lapse of less than forty years, while to a casual observer, things have appeared to go on smoothly,—changes, though almost imperceptible, yet nevertheless important, have been taking place in the very heart of the connexion. The ministry has passed into other hands, amongst whom has arisen a governing junto, composed of men whose abilities for management and address are unquestionable; but whose conduct as Christian ministers is such as must, in every candid and reflecting mind, excite suspicion and alarm.

While we have been dazzled with external splendour;—the erection of commodious and elegant chapels,—the yearly increase of members,—the accession of respectable and opulent hearers,—the introduction of talented and polished ministers,—a more extended range of missionary exertions, and a princely revenue in continual circulation, cheerfully contributed by the people to maintain all this,—while we have been captivated with this magnificent exterior, and our hearts have been gladdened with apparent prosperity, it is to be feared that those things wherein consisteth the true glory of Methodism, have been suffered to languish and decline. That simplicity of

manners, fervent zeal and ardent love;—that visible line of distinction between the professor and the man of the world,—that affectionate solicitude for each others spiritual welfare,—that conscious, holy, heavenly communion of the saints,—that faithful, disinterested, and impartial, but tender and compassionate administration of wholesome discipline;—these, and the like invaluable characteristics of primitive Methodism, are, in the judgment of many pious, intelligent, and reflecting individuals, perceptibly departing. And what is singular, and most to be deplored is, that many who sincerely love the cause of Christ, appear not to be at all awake to these things.

One main cause of this lamentable declension, is the want of a vigilant and discriminating presbytery. The leaders, stewards, and local preachers are in general, in their official capacity, too obsequious. Surely there is a medium between timid servility, and obstinate self-will. We are loud and frequent in our complaints of ministerial domination, but do we as frequently advert to and reprehend a want of integrity and fortitude on the part of our local officers, who must concur, at least passively, in this arbitrary conduct? The most intolerant and overbearing Methodist preacher in England, could effect but little harm while associated with a well-compact, discerning, and conscientious body of leaders and stewards. Highly as we ought to esteem those who labour in the word and doctrine, we are not to surrender our judgment, and betray our trust in submission to their authority. No real ambassador of Christ will ever require us to do so; and yet what a servile spirit prevails in the leaders' meetings almost throughout the connexion. Only let a superintendent preacher gravely assert in an assembly of leaders and stewards, that such and such a measure will be for the good of the cause, and be it whatever it may, there are many present, who without thinking a moment for themselves or for the people whom they represent, and without considering their responsibility to the church, are almost sure to give their concurrence and sanction. Should any one present venture to express a contrary opinion, though he may propose his objections never so modestly, and support them by arguments never so clear, and to candid minds never so convincing, he cannot shake the credulity of his brethren; but it is very possible he may thereby awaken the jealousy, and incur the displeasure of his minister; the effects of which he may experience another day, unless he escape by a timely withdrawal from office.

Many, very many instances might be adduced wherein this has been the case. Men of sound judgment, and sterling piety, and who by consistency of character, liberal contributions, and persevering labours, were at once the support and ornament of the connexion, have by thus discovering an unconquerable love of truth, rendered themselves offensive to ministerial authority, and procured to themselves the aversion of their brethren with whom they have for many years associated in transacting the affairs of the church. It is no difficult matter for an artful superintendent to render one who has offended him odious in the eyes of his old and long tried Christian companions. Ministerial ambition can gain the confidence and support of our local authorities, even at the sacrifice of our most worthy and patriotic brethren. A man who has devoted the zeal of his youth, and the vigour of his manhood to the cause of Methodism, may have the mortification to find himself repulsed and discredited by those who have witnessed innumerable instances of his fidelity; while the same persons will caress and support a circuit preacher, who to each of them is an entire stranger, and perhaps lately joined to the connexion from some other body of Christians, and may therefore be justly suspected to have no real attachment to the community, any farther than it suits his convenience, or serves his interest. Many have learned by painful experience, that opposition to the will of a preacher is more hardly forgiven than flagrant immorality; and that in some instances nothing is more grievous and displeasing, than truth, even when it is spoken in love!

It is not needful to expose and detail the arts employed by the preachers in practising upon this pitiful, this blameable credulity in the people; they are already too well known and felt in almost every circuit in the connexion. Rather let us advert to a mistaken apprehension of things which gives occasion for this manifest and growing evil. It is this:—the preachers assume the authority, and claim the confidence due to their more worthy predecessors, and the people, in their simplicity, concede to these unwarrantable assumptions. So long as this is the case, a redress of grievances and a reformation of abuses in the connexion is impossible. Either the preachers must make good their pretensions by becoming more disinterested and spiritual, or the people must learn to view them as they are, and receive them accordingly, before any lasting good can be effected. Nothing can rescue Methodism but a return to its first simplicity. How this is to be effected, or whether it ever will, the great Head of the Church only knows; and whatever means are employed, He only can render them successful. A spirit of inquiry and examination has been excited, and is now in operation, by which some temporary

good at least is produced, as is evident by the recent courteous demeanour of many superintendent and other circuit preachers. Some regard this as a mere affectation of kindness, which is only to continue till the present excitation of the public mind has subsided, and are of opinion that, a permanent reformation is almost hopeless. Let us, however, take encouragement from the consideration, that the case is in the hands of Him with whom all things are possible. Effectual, fervent prayer, and the diligent and persevering application of every laudable means is our province,—to succeed and bless these means belongs alone to God.

Manchester, June, 1830.

HOPEFUL.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

Will you allow me, through the medium of your invaluable 'Circular,' to communicate a piece of information affecting the rights and privileges of an important class of officers in the Methodist connexion,—I mean the local preachers,—which has just come to my knowledge. You are already aware that several of the local preachers, as well as leaders and stewards, in the Liverpool North Circuit, have dared not only to think for themselves, but on several occasions to speak their sentiments, respecting a flagrant breach of faith on the part of the Conference, thereby rendering themselves obnoxious to the preachers and several of their partisans; a very few of whom, resident on the Cheshire side, where we have a neat chapel and a society, have lately hit upon a notable scheme of venting their spleen, by getting up a requisition to be presented to the superintendent, requesting him not to appoint the said local preachers to preach at Tranmere. As considerable efforts have been made for several weeks past, I understand that the signatures now amount to THREE; one—the chief instigator, and the most zealous in the good work, is to be (although not a member of society) a trustee of the new chapel now in course of erection; the second has only lately become a resident there, and is comparatively a stranger amongst us; and the third is a farmer, of sincere piety and simple manners, but who has lent a too willing ear to those who unblushingly break the ninth commandment.

I understand the local preachers who are thus attempted to be hindered in the accustomed exercise of their disinterested ministerial labours, have their characters for piety, ability, orthodoxy and attention to their appointments investigated every three months; it is then very natural to inquire, what have they done to expose themselves to this most novel and unprecedented proceeding. Are they immoral in conduct? No. Are they erroneous in doctrine? No. Have they obtruded the matters now in dispute from the pulpit, or have they made them subjects of conversation in the families where they may have been entertained? No! Nothing of the kind is imputed to them by their bitterest accusers. What fault have they then committed? Will you, Mr. Editor, believe?—will the Methodist public believe?—that the sum total of their offending, as stated by the signers, is—they are suspected—suspected of being connected with the 'Circular.' But the most astonishing, (and if some of the signers themselves had not said it) the most incredible part of the case is, that two of the travelling preachers of the circuit commanded and encouraged this proceeding. I give you this information as it came to me: doubtless you will inquire after the case. I hope you may find it to be erroneous, for the sake of the rising cause at Tranmere; for the credit of the requisitionists themselves; and for the honour of the two preachers referred to. I think you will be of my opinion, that if the above case be but in the main correct, the ultra preachers and their ultra friends about Tranmere, could not have adopted a surer method of proclaiming their weakness, ignorance and folly.

Yours, most respectfully,

A WESLEYAN METHODIST.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

Gentlemen,—Your Correspondent from the London South Circuit, dated 29th June, 1830, has made a mistake in saying "furnishing the fourth married preacher's house cost about £300." It was stated in the quarterly meeting prior to the division of the circuit, that about £300 would be wanted, as furnishing the last house cost about that sum. The division of the circuit altered things: at Lambeth part of the money raised for furniture went to pay the circuit debt; and at Southwark, by purchasing cheap or inferior furniture, they made half the sum do—say £150. The debt paid at Gainsford-street chapel is £70, instead of £50.

A LOVER OF TRUTH.

13th August.

#### NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"EPSILON," "OBSERVATOR," and "A WESLEYAN" are received.  
The *Strictures on Mr. Isaac's pamphlet* shall be inserted as soon as possible. Also, "COMMON SENSE" on the administration of the Sacrament.  
We thank "ITHMAH" and several other friends for their Conference news, but shall defer publishing it until the minutes appear. Thus much we may state for certain, that the increase to the societies is extremely trivial, and that several of the Conference funds are in any thing but a flourishing condition. Our readers may next month expect an interesting article on this subject.

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# The Circular

TO  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. IX.

30TH SEPTEMBER, 1830.

PRICE 3D.

The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.

## THE CONFERENCE AT LEEDS,

JULY—AUGUST, 1830.

"It will afford you high satisfaction to know, that the Lord has greatly owned the labours of our brethren, not only on our foreign stations, but also in the prosperity and happiness of the numerous societies in this country. Great as were the efforts made by some disaffected persons to interrupt our harmony and sow the seeds of discord and anarchy, the revolution of another year has, we believe, given ample satisfaction to all discreet and pious persons amongst us, of the wisdom and necessity of those prompt measures which the exigencies of the case required, to preserve entire that salutary government of our societies, under which for a series of years they have enjoyed peace and prosperity. The Christian love and harmony of all our brethren assembled in this populous town in our eighty-seventh annual Conference were never surpassed; and a more gracious influence in the public ordinances was seldom felt than at present."—*Min. Conf.*, 1830, page 104.

UNTIL within the last three years the whole Methodist community would as soon have thought of looking for ice at the torrid zone as for errors in the Minutes of Conference. In that short space, however, a mighty change has taken place in the minds of the Methodist people; and the determination of Conference to adhere to their claims of absolute power, has awakened thousands to a diligent scrutiny of the statements they put forth.

In the remarks we have to make, it will appear how far the assertion of *prosperity* and happiness, made in the extract at the head of this article, is borne out by fact.

In the Minutes, page 53, the usual question is asked, "What is the **NUMBER** of **MEMBERS** in our societies?" This is answered by giving a list of all the circuits, with the number at each. The additions to shew the number in each district, as stated in page 120, have been made in a very slovenly manner. The Newcastle district, for instance, is stated as 11,422, when it is only 10,422. In page 53, there is a place called Ashford, stated as having 174 members. There is such a town; but it is not a circuit, as will be seen by referring to the Kent district, page 108. The members there have no doubt been added in the district of which it forms a part. There are also other errors; but we shall content ourselves with correcting the total, without further observing upon them.

The total number in Great Britain is stated (p. 56) at 249,278; but after striking out Ashford 174, the correct addition is 248,382. The number last year was 247,529; therefore **THE INCREASE THIS YEAR IS ONLY 853**, instead of 1749 as the Minutes have it. The increase in Ireland is 50.

Our readers may like to see where the increase and decrease have taken place, and we therefore give a list of the districts.

**Increase**—Second London 168; Lynn 88; Oxford 137; Devonport 279; Bristol 27; First South Wales 120; Second South Wales 345; North Wales 223; Shrewsbury 137; Macclesfield 142; Liverpool 181; Leeds 542; Sheffield 80; Nottingham 621; Lincoln 464; Hull 608; Carlisle 5; Aberdeen 50.—Total 4217.

**Decrease**—First London 257; Kent 71; Norwich 99; Northampton 83; Portsmouth 120; Guernsey 28; Cornwall 501; Exeter 59; Bath 114; Birmingham 401; Manchester 113 (the decrease in Manchester and Salford is 272); Halifax 656; Bradford 221; Derby 52; York 241; Whitby 115; Darlington 15; Newcastle 93; Isle of Man 10; Edinburgh 86; Shetland Isles 29.—Total 3364.

The decrease in Yorkshire is 669.

The increase in Lincolnshire is 1458, and in Lancashire 197.

On looking at the result, we confess ourselves at a loss to discover those features of prosperity on which the Conference appear to dwell with so much satisfaction. So far from there being cause of joy, we think that, considering the vast mass of machinery at work, there is abundant cause to mourn such a result.

An expression of regret for past conduct, and of deep humiliation at the partial withdrawal of the divine countenance, would have been much more fitting.

As we shall insert an article in our next number on the immense sums expended in Methodism, we shall not at present say any more on this subject.

Kingswood and Woodhouse-Grove Schools. The fund, we understand, is £1500 deficient.

Book affairs are very much embarrassed. To help them a little each preacher is to pay three guineas for four years, and also to take to the amount of £5 in books.

The following is Copy of a Letter received from the Conference, directed to Messrs. Robert Eckett and others, in answer to a Memorial sent to the Leeds Conference this year, signed by a number of Leaders, Trustees, Local Preachers, &c. in the First London West Circuit.

Dear Brethren,

Leeds, 9th August, 1830.

In reply to your Letter, which has been read before the Conference, we are desired to inform you, that they see no reason to depart from their former decisions, since they believe them to be conformable to the rules and usages of the body, and quite in unison with the Plan of Pacification.

Signed on behalf of the Conference, GEO. MORLEY, President.  
ROBT. NEWTON. Secretary.

\* \* The Address, we believe, was not official; how comes it to pass that the Answer is? The Conference is at least becoming civil.—EDITS.

## TO THE REV. JOHN SCOTT.

Sir,—When I addressed a note to you, shortly after the last quarterly meeting of the Liverpool North Circuit, of which you have been superintendent for the last three years, and requested you not to insert my name in the forthcoming plan,—I said, that at some future time I might probably trouble you with the reasons for that conduct. I have been a local preacher for the last twenty years, and, in that capacity, have been known to many in different places; and it may be a necessary step for me now, in this public manner, to intimate to my religious friends the motives which actuated me in resigning my office in the Methodist body; for although this is addressed to you, and meant for your eye, that circumstance will not prevent its being perused by the thousands of readers of the *Circular*.

And, in the first place, I would say that, whatever some may think of the work of a local preacher, it is not, according to my experience of it, a very light affair. Some who pay little or no respect to the man sustaining the office, would not think it an easy duty to hold themselves in readiness on a Sabbath morning, be the weather what it might, to travel five, eight, ten or twelve miles. I have done this frequently, through rain, without the accommodation of dry clothes at the end of my journey—preached immediately on arriving, and returned, in many instances, without any kind of refreshment, and sometimes at the risk of life itself; added to all which, I, in common with my brethren in this circuit, have for many years been compelled to pay my own travelling expenses—the money raised at the places where the local preachers have laboured, going, nevertheless, to the support of the travelling preachers, though some of these places have not been favoured with a single visit from them for years together.

I know the common and general reply to the foregoing observations, whether applying to the office of a class leader or local preacher, is the following: “At the command of the Almighty, and influenced by his love, you are labouring for the salvation of your fellow men, and to him, therefore, you must look for your reward.” This has had its full force with me for years, and this is the principle that, operating on the minds of many, has prevented them from laying down office. But do not those who abuse the officer and lord it over him, presuming in doing so that he dares not free himself from his situation and its attendant evils, very much resemble the highwayman who should first rob and illtreat you, and then quote Scripture to prove that, after all, you ought to be on the best terms possible with him, such being your duty.

Now, Sir, it does appear to me, that if (as on one or two late occasions you have seemed to conceive) it be something approaching to blasphemy for one of an inferior grade in the church to question the truth or propriety of a thing which you or your colleagues might think proper to say or do; yet on the other hand, an individual sustaining an office similar in some respects to your own, and superior in its being gratuitously performed, in bringing forward a proposition which he may conceive tends to the general good, is entitled to some share of support and favour for his work sake. But I put it to you, Sir, if, in a variety of cases, the local preacher in the Liverpool Circuits has not been despised—trodden under foot, and insulted in the quarter-day meetings, because it may be he lacked that respectability in the world which, alas! alas! for Methodism, is now become so necessary in your connexion, especially in large circuits.

This contumely which I complain of, and respecting which I can adduce facts, is what I refuse to endure, let others act as they please. Neither will I, as an individual, sustain an office among a people where, in church matters, the chief rulers are a sort of nondescript. I am not going too far, I conceive, in making the assertion that it is so in Methodism, after having been present at meetings for a scores of years, at one of which the presiding preacher, on seeing the tide of the meeting going against his avowed views, rose up and gravely told the assembly, that it was not a legal meeting; at another, where a preacher has sat in the chair for six hours at once, and at the expiration of that time refused to put a motion regularly moved and seconded, and for the discussion of which the meeting was expressly convened. I repeat it, a superintendent of a circuit in Methodism is like no other being of which one can form an idea. The speaker in our parliament is subject to certain regulations; so are chairmen in all popular meetings. But a superintendent presiding at a meeting in Methodism will tell you (I have heard Mr. Bunting tell it to a meeting) that he is not subject to such rules—he is not a chairman or president merely—he is a *superintendent*, and in *him* rests the exposition of Methodist rules and laws; and though one superintendent may differ from all other superintendents in such exposition, yet will he act on his own opinion. You, Sir, have done so, where your opinion was in direct contradiction to that of the preachers in the Liverpool South Circuit. Again, while in one circuit a trustee gains admission into a meeting, and is suffered to take a part in its debates, though he be not a member of the connexion,—in another circuit, at a precisely similar meeting, a trustee is informed that he is not a member, and has no right to be present!

It is very true that you have left this circuit; and had I continued in office, I should not for some time, and possibly might never again, come into collision with you; but after awhile it is possible I might be subjected again to your rule or discipline, or in the mean time to that of one similarly constituted in mind. Continuing in office, I might conceive it my duty to speak to something under the consideration of a meeting; and, as has been the case, I might be told by one secure in the favour of the superintendent, that I was a liar; and the superintendent might (as you did) suffer the individual to deal out his abuse, without any effort to call him to order;—nay, for aught I know, the superintendent, acting from the discretionary power lodged in him, (you so act sometimes, as you have told us) might suffer no one to speak on one side of a subject, but as many as pleased on the other side, (as you may remember you did;) and as I conceive such conduct to be extremely partial, unfair, and anything but what it should be, I will not remain in a situation where I am subject to it.

After all, you may say, “ah, but where is your call to the ministry, and what have you done with it; how have you disposed of that if you never had it?” I answer by asking you what will you do, if, as may happen, (for it is certainly in the bounds of possibility, and you, and men like minded with yourself, are hastening on the event) the voluntary association of men in the Methodist societies should so far decrease as that a number of preachers must retire from the body? When you shall have satisfactorily answered me that question, then I bind myself to answer yours.

Permit me to give you a word of caution before I close.

You may despise it, but certain I am, that attention to it will not be without its use. Be more on your guard when speaking on the affairs that unfortunately have arisen to trouble the Methodist body. Had you observed this rule, you would not have committed yourself as you did to me, when you styled the memorial sent from Liverpool to the Conference of 1829, a "VILE ABOMINATION." Attention to this rule would have preserved you from flourishing about your head the note I sent you, containing my resignation, thanking God for it, and expressing a wish that others would follow! However it might appear to you, I am persuaded that such a fact will not redound much to the honour of your pastoral care of, and tender concern for, the church of Christ.

At this particular juncture, be extremely cautious, and wherever you go, whisper the necessity of caution into the ears of your brethren the preachers also. Set not up (as you have done) the rich men, who, in some cases, are not members of society, nor others who, though they may be members, and respectable too, yet scarcely ever shew their faces in a prayer meeting, have never conducted a class meeting, or preached a sermon, or indeed possess piety or ability to do any of these things; set not such in the high places in your connexion in preference to the pious men *who bring in your revenues, keep together your people*, and who, by their labours in various ways, are instrumental in bringing souls to God, and adding them to your church—are not *these* the salt of the earth, are not *these* your providers and best friends. Use them more kindly than hitherto you have been wont to do, and never forget that this is not the place or time for compulsion in religious matters. The Methodist body is declared to be a purely voluntary association, and if you expect your institutions and funds to be supported, and that men should adhere to your connexion, you *must* show to those who will continue to yield such support, their advantage in so doing.—I beg leave to remain, Sir,

Your's obediently,  
W. LEWIS.

LIVERPOOL, 30th Aug. 1830.

\* \* \* We cannot but feel extremely sorry, that the respectable writer of the foregoing letter should have been induced to take such a step as the abandonment of his office in the Methodist connexion; and although we doubt not that he had received sufficient provocation, and that too from a quarter which rendered it the more painful to his feelings, yet with every allowance for such treatment, we cannot under all the circumstances approve of such a mode of redress as our correspondent has taken, and most sincerely do we hope that his example will not be followed by any of those who have been, and still are to be found at the post of duty, however irksome; ready to take up their cross, and fulfil the task assigned to them as officers in the church, "through good report and evil report, through honour and dishonour." Such individuals, and such conduct, will ever obtain the approbation of the best friends of constitutional Methodism, and they will feel that though they may suffer abuse, and be treated often with contumely, yet their reward is with them in the consciousness of their having "done that which it was their duty to do."—EDITORS.

#### THE CHURCH GOVERNMENT OF WESLEYAN METHODISM.

(Continued from page 63 of our last Circular.)

IV. It has been judiciously remarked that the history of the church has seldom been the history of religion, or of vital Christianity. It has generally been the history of ambition, cupidity and priesthood, on the one hand, and of degraded ignorance and debasing superstition on the other. It was the glory of early Methodism to reverse this painful proposition. For many years her history con-

tained little else than the most gratifying accounts of the spread of the gospel, and of the recovery of men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Spots and passages there are in that history which arrest the eye of the reader, and excite a momentary feeling of pain. But the general spirit which actuated this great family overcame all difficulties, and sacrificed every thing to order, peace and harmony. After the division in 1797, the "troublers of Israel" were few; and their feuds and distractions were speedily merged in the general wane of prosperity, which carried forward the connexion.

That prosperity resulted from the distinct recognition, and public acknowledgment, by the Conference, of the great and leading principles which had been incorporated in the constitution, and on which the habits and genius of the people were formed. The Conference was stript of its imaginary supremacy. District meetings were reduced to the level, and limited to the sphere of their proper duties and powers; and the boasted prerogatives of the superintendent, so far as regarded his power over the local officers and people, were rendered dependant on the votes of the leaders' meeting. This was the view taken of the concessions by the Conference itself in the printed circular of 1797. They there speak of "the sacrifices in respect to authority, which we have made on behalf of the whole body of travelling preachers"—"we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendents' authority;" and, "we may truly say, that the district committees have hardly any authority remaining; but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up a rough draft of the stations." "Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings."—Circular of Conf. 1797.

It was on the ground of these concessions; it was because they were thus understood, and thus acted upon, both by the Conference and the people, in 1797; and because they thus enabled the people to return to their ancient customs, and long established course of transacting all local matters, by discussion and vote, in their own local meetings, free from foreign interference and dictation, that the storms of that period subsided, and peace again smiled on the connexion.

And what has disturbed that peace? Have the people quarrelled with their valued institutions, and sought to change their laws and customs? Have they sought to introduce anything new; or demanded alterations, incompatible with the existing relations of Methodism. The arena of debate and discussion having been thrown open, and occupied by all parties, many things, doubtless, have been, and will continue to be, brought under review. But this is the *effect*, and was not the *cause* of the present agitations. Those agitations began by the Conference setting up itself against a decision of a leaders' meeting, relative to a *local* matter. They were inflamed by the superintendent's taking upon himself to suspend a local preacher, contrary to the judgment and decision of the local preachers' meeting; and they were carried to their height when the people saw district committees, which had been stript of all authority, but a bare negative, in 1797, assuming to themselves an absolute jurisdiction over our local institutions; presuming to pronounce judicially on the character and conduct of local officers; submitting novel and unheard of tests to leaders' meetings; interdicting the right of vote, and suspending the functions of all who refused

these tests; and fulminating ecclesiastical censures and excommunications against thousands of our members, whose duty, and whose consciences forbade their submission to this new and unexpected manifestation of the "MAN of SIN."

A feeling of despair and anguish struck the hearts of many of the best and staunchest friends of the constitution of 1797, when the Conference of 1828, after six days deliberation, pronounced all these monstrous proceedings *constitutional*, under the regulations of 1797! They had hoped that the Conference would have possessed virtue to set all right by a disavowal of, at least, the most obnoxious and unprincipled of the proceedings of the Leeds Special District Meeting; and by a renunciation of the arbitrary and tyrannical principles laid down in their printed minutes. But when they saw that the absolute party were too strong even for the Conference itself; that they had influence to raise their turbulent chief to the chair, to decide his own cause, and pronounce his own eulogy; and, in short, that neither honour, conscience, nor shame, could check their outrages, or inspire with common decency this overbearing party, then, indeed, many of these friends withdrew from the connexion; whilst others, to use the language of our correspondent L., "continue to fill their accustomed stations, but are far from being in good humour, and hearty in the cause;" and others again "have retired into sullen privacy."

But what then? Is the constitution of 1797 for ever gone? Has it indeed "so easily slipped through the hands of the people?" This is a very hasty conclusion of our correspondent, and of many others. We have come to a very different conclusion. We believe that the present throes and conflicts, so far from ending in the overthrow of all our liberties, will ere long terminate in the more firm establishment of those liberties; and, searching down to their broad and deep foundations, will consolidate and establish our general institutions, imparting to them all that solidity and permanency of which they are capable.

The pledge of the future we find in the past. The constitution has not slipped through the hands of the people. It has no where been given up by them. Notwithstanding the timidity of some, and the despair of others, there was found, in the London south circuit, a chosen band who could not yield up Methodism to factious despotism, and who did not dare to withdraw from their long occupied posts of duty, and spheres of usefulness. Calm and dispassionate in the midst of tumult, they cast their eyes around on the scene of conflict, and erected their standard on the pillar of the constitution, defaced and broken as it was. On this ground they dared to face the enemy, and nobly fought the battle of the connexion. Strong in the justice of their cause, and invincible in patient persevering, they braved the vengeance of the sacred conclave itself, and dealt out blow for blow. Sophistry was met by sound argument; and darkness and error were overwhelmed with the force of truth. The fire of their assailants has ceased; and, so far as reason and argument are concerned, these champions of our constitution remain masters of the field. Instead of returning to the conflict, the great anxiety of the preachers is to conceal the news of their defeat. There is, perhaps, no one subject on which they manifest so much concern, as they do to prevent the people from obtaining and reading the publications of the London south circuit.

Nor is it in an appeal to the fundamental laws of the connexion alone that our friends have triumphed. The

resolutions of the 23rd Sept. 1828, subscribed by 106 names of individuals, all holding office in the London south circuit, were a direct act of defiance, and were doubtless intended as a challenge to the Conference faction, to go over and hold another special district meeting in that circuit. Was that challenge accepted? Did the president, with his official advisers, and his district police, dare to set his foot in that circuit? It was not because the defiance was not felt; it was not for want of inclination to act against these stern opposers. But "these men," said one of the preachers, "have fairly taken us by the beard; and we must now fight it out with another special district meeting, or confess ourselves beaten!" Beaten they were; and their defeat was made an argument to quiet the minds of the people. Preachers, pacifically disposed, whispered in our ears, "you need be under no further apprehension; you will hear no more of special district meetings trying local men; the Conference see that it wont do; the Leeds business was a very painful one; it wont occur again!"

It is true that the muttered admissions of individual preachers form no security to the people, so long as the Conference, with stunted obstinacy, maintain their unrighteous decrees. But the above facts evince that the power of the absolute party is paralyzed, in its main stretch; and that the constitution of 1797 has not yet "*slipped through the hands of the people*." One half of what we have heard from preachers individually, if it had been avowed by the Conference in their minutes, would have gone far to restore peace to the connexion. But the eyes of the people are too widely opened to be again so easily deceived. They perceive that their liberties can never be secure, so long as the late regulations, formally recognizing and adopting the minutes of the Leeds Special District Meeting, and the whole system of the district police as there developed, remain unrepealed. It may not be,—it is not now possible for the Conference to act on that system. It has been blown upon, denounced and exposed, as a faithless system, utterly subversive of the treaty and covenant of 1797. But the disposition of the Conference has been openly manifested. They have paraded their "*inherent rights*"; and have shown us too plainly what they are capable of, and what they *will* do, so soon as capacity shall aid their corruption. Nothing at present is wanting to them but the power! The late outbreaking of ABSOLUTISM, was rather too sudden and too public. It struck the people with alarm, and for the present has in a great measure defeated itself. The great object with the preachers now is, therefore, to allay the ferment and lull the people into a false security. They would tell us, that we have nothing to fear, that the Conference have learnt a lesson, that we shall hear no more of special district meetings in local affairs, &c. But the Leeds case and its principles remain confirmed by the Conference; the regulations of 1828 remain unrepealed on the minutes. When, therefore, a few years of peace shall have succeeded, and the Conference shall feel itself strong enough to make a new display of *absolute* power, if the matter be left where it now is, they will appeal to the Leeds case as a precedent, and to the recent regulations as the established law of Methodism. Then, although we do not believe that the Conference will ever succeed in the career of tyranny, yet the next generation will have to execrate the criminal apathy and base indifference of their fathers. Here we tender our own justification. This is the ground on which the present CIRCULAR has been

established; and on this ground we call upon all our friends throughout the connexion to support it. We are happy to find that the call is answered. Our sale increases,—the number and talents of our correspondents keep pace with our extended circulation; and the influence we have already obtained is such as the Conference itself cannot much longer affect to despise.

But, independently of the exploded right of interference in local affairs by special district meetings, our correspondent L. will probably point us to the "*inherent rights*,"—to the pompous port, and gorgeous trappings, of that deputy apostle—or recognized pastor—or new-testament evangelist, or by whatsoever other designation the advocates of Methodistical prelacy shall ultimately agree (for agree on this important subject, they, at present, cannot) to dignify the *newly defined* superintendent of a circuit. And what is to be done if this enlarged dignitary is to dictate to leaders' meetings and quarterly meetings the subjects which alone he will condescend to permit them to discuss; or the views which, in deference to his superior judgment, these meetings are to take of these subjects; and if, after discoursing until midnight, he is then, in the plenitude of his power, to refuse to submit to the vote the questions discussed; and to suppress motions which have been regularly moved and seconded? Nay, more; what is to become of us if, in any cases, *ordinary or extraordinary*, (for the distinction rests with himself) and in defiance of the express terms of the treaty of 1797, this superintendent is to appoint and remove local officers, and to admit, censure, suspend, or expel, private members, in direct opposition to the votes of the local meetings, and by virtue alone of his own supreme, inherent, and apostolical authority and divine commission?

We blush to record for future generations, that such proud and anti-christian claims are not only preferred and insisted on by the Methodist Conference, but that they are urged to *nausea* in the pestiferous writings of their servile advocates.

But to what end have they been preferred? and to what purpose are they still maintained? Have the pious Methodists any where viewed with satisfaction this attempt to exchange the rough mantle of the prophet for the purple and scarlet of the woman which sitteth on the seven mountains? The mass of our people may be poor and illiterate; in many cases they may have been misled and deceived; they may have yielded to the misrepresentations of the preachers, and mistaken their friends for their enemies. But can our correspondent imagine for a moment that these servile doctrines have gained any ground in Methodism? Scarcely were they preferred, when they met with the most determined opposition. Every thing that has been advanced in support of them, either by the Conference or its agents, and whether official, demi-official, or gratuitous, has served but to draw forth the most masterly replies and the most triumphant defences of the liberties of the connexion. The Conference have been made to tremble on the new and hollow ground which they have chosen to occupy; and their prostrate advocates have writhed under the lash of a just and indignant criticism. The people have taken a full share in the great and arduous struggle. Wherever light has been suffered to break in upon them, they have not only hailed it with joyous welcome, but they have already expended hundreds of pounds in diffusing information and disseminating the truth on a subject of such vast importance to themselves, to their families, and to their posterity.

The open avowal, and official display, of principles diametrically opposed to the treaty and covenant of 1797, exposed, contradicted, and thwarted as those principles have been, can never be regarded as an overthrow of the Methodist constitution. That constitution still survives. It lives in the hearts, in the habits, and in the judgments, of the people. Little comfort, indeed, have the abettors of an absolute despotism in their attempts to destroy our liberties. Our correspondent L. is amongst those who have left us in despair. We, who could never quarrel with Methodism, nor forsake her in the hour of affliction and danger, already begin to see the throne of despotism tottering and "nodding to its fall."

Shall we be reminded of the fact that, even during the past year, these anti-methodistical powers of the superintendent have been brought into actual operation, in several of the circuits? That quarterly meetings have actually been prevented from addressing the Conference on the subject of the public grievances; that local preachers, without trial, or even accusation of any kind, have had no work assigned them on the plan; and that in some instances, leaders and stewards have been jostled out of office in an irregular manner?

Several very flagrant cases of this description have appeared in this circular; and we have received intimation of some others, in which the office of superintendent having been entrusted to pride, arrogance and imbecility, there have been petty and revolting acts of tyranny, pompous threats, swellings, boastings, and contemptible tricks and manœuvres, in making the plans, appointing stewards, and managing quarterly and leaders' meetings.

We have reason to believe, however, that the Conference, whose policy is to secure their assumed authority, with as little disturbance as possible, do not thank these narrow minded superintendents for their zeal in thus embroiling themselves and their circuits. Having published and sanctioned the "*inherent rights*," they cannot well call the zealots to account; but a different spirit has been recommended to them. And we frankly confess that we are more afraid of the people becoming reconciled to the language and avowal of the "*inherent rights*," on the plea that "they are not enforced, and will never be called into exercise," than we are of any effects which may result from their actual display. "We could wish nothing more than that the preachers should go on, and carry into practical effect the principles which they have laid down. It required six years after Mr. Wesley's death, to rouse the connexion to the assertion of their liberties; but if the preachers would not be quite so sparing of their labours in this way, if they would assist us with a few more displays of their newly assumed powers, it would not require half that time to induce the connexion to resume those liberties."—*Reply to Watson*, p. 40.

The justice of the above remark has been evinced in all the instances to which we have alluded. Whenever the superintendent has displayed his powers in opposition to the local authorities, a spirit of inquiry has been roused, a ready admission has been found for those books and pamphlets which yield information on the subject, and although the immediate effects have been disastrous, the general cause of *constitutional* Methodism has been advanced. Nor are those immediate effects without their influence on the preachers. The superintendents who take this course destroy their own usefulness, render themselves unhappy, and justly become objects of sus-

picion and distrust. Their circuits in these cases, if no actual division take place, are kept in continual agitation; their prosperity is staid; the numbers decline; and they have no other increase to exhibit than of debts and difficulties. From all these instances, therefore, if the preachers had wisdom to perceive, or grace to acknowledge, the truth, they must admit our principle; viz. that it is impossible to carry on the local government of a circuit or society, except by the authority, and in conformity with the votes and decisions, of the *local* meetings. The reverie of Conference and ministerial power, as lately expounded to us, is a dream as dangerous as it is idle. It inspires the patient with delirium, and places the whole community in alarm and jeopardy from his wild ravings and fantastic tricks. That this *mania* should have seized the Methodist Conference is the more deplorable, because "the people will not thus submit." Their genius and habits, formed under the long settled constitution of Methodism, have not prepared them to yield to servile degradation. Nothing but the concessions and code of laws could restore peace to the connexion in 1797. The Conference have now witnessed some of the effects; and, if they obstinately persist in their present course, they will ere long witness other, and far more serious, effects, of the repeal of that Constitution; repealed, as it has been, in words, and in the official acts of Conference; but still tenaciously adhered to by the people in every circuit; and never infringed upon by the superintendent, without conflicts, disputes, secessions, and even serious divisions.

(To be concluded in our next.)

STRICTURES ON THE REV. DANIEL ISAAC'S PAMPHLET,  
ENTITLED

"The Rules of the Protestant Methodists brought to the test of Holy Scripture, in a letter addressed to the members of that community."

FOR nearly three years a controversy has been carried on in the connexion, which has thrown upon the Methodist Conference, and its advocates, the task of defending the authority which they have assumed, and the acts and conduct by which that authority has been exemplified in practice.

On the part of the people, a masculine appeal has been made to Scripture, to primitive practice, to the fundamental laws of the connexion, and to the general principles of civil and religious liberty. On the part of the preachers we have on the contrary, perversions of the obvious sense and plain letter, of the inspired volume, which are truly shocking;—attempts the most futile, not only to assimilate the government of the Christian church, to the governments of this world; but on the very worst principles of such governments; on principles of arbitrary rule and authority, equally destructive of civil and of religious liberty;—and, what is worse than all the rest, we have an utter, shameless, and open violation of public faith and treaty—a direct, a systematic, and persevering breach of the solemn covenant of 1797.

What is Methodism to gain by the assertion and adoption of the principles, now so zealously inculcated by her itinerant preachers, under the direct sanction of her Conference; and so determinedly opposed by so large and increasing a proportion of her children. Solomon, obtaining wisdom of the Lord, ruled the kingdom in righteousness, and his reign was peace. But Rehoboam, selecting councillors who would yield nothing to the people, provoked the rending of the kingdom, and lost ten tribes out of twelve. Such we fear—we seriously fear, is the fate preparing for Methodism. That the preachers will be wiser than Rehoboam, there is nothing in their conduct to intimate. Instead of acknowledging error, and retracing their steps, they advance with haughty mien; and obtrude on the public, views and schemes of Methodistical government, which disgust the most reasonable men amongst us; and, attracting the notice of the world, in its periodical literature, are calculated to make Methodism stink in the nostrils of a nation which boasts of civil and religious freedom.

Every fresh publication of our aspiring priesthood does but serve to

inflame and consolidate the opposition already powerful; and whilst it exposes the nakedness of these priestly claims, it urges on a crisis, the effects of which no man can calculate. Men,—reading men,—thinking men, will not surrender their understandings and their liberties, even to the Methodist Conference!

Amongst the champions of the absolute supremacy of Conference, who seek, by magnifying to the extreme point of absurdity the powers and attributes of that august assembly, to cover their broken faith, and hide their shame, is the Rev. Daniel Isaac. This man, like Mr. Watson, contrived to work his way to public notice, as the advocate and friend of religious liberty. To that great cause, indeed, especially amongst the Methodists, Mr. Isaac has done good service in his "Ecclesiastical Claims." He is now, like Mr. Watson, turned completely round; and having written down the claims of the established clergy, he is now employed in writing up far more lofty claims, on behalf of Methodist preachers. The man has talents, and he has industry. But his talents are of the coarsest kind, and displayed in a style at all times vulgar, and frequently disgusting. His industry in a good cause is effective; and he then moves straight forward, like a brewer's dray-horse, splashing the mud in all directions; but, in a bad cause, it is mere aptitude at mischief: he then works like the mole, undermining the ground on which you stand, and distracting the attention of the inexperienced bystander by the hillocks which he throws up on every side. The mischief is going on all around, but the operator is safe, in his underground passages; and cannot be molested until some one who is acquainted with the habits and the instinct of the animal shall pitch him a trap. The task is a humble one, but it may not be the less serviceable, to trace some of the burrows of this earthly creature.

Mr. Isaac has undertaken to address a succession of letters to the "private members," of the Protestant Methodist community, the professed object of which is to bring the rules of that much injured people to the test of Holy Scripture. In prosecuting this task, however, Mr. Isaac has introduced sentiments and expressions utterly subversive of the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism as exhibited in the plan of pacification and the concessions and code of laws of 1797. This it is chiefly which has attracted our notice; but there are other points of importance affecting the general liberties of the Christian church which demand attention from us.

Men who change with the wind, in shifting their sails, must always be allowed a word of *personal* justification; and, before they can openly shake hands with the men whom they have been long in the habit of abusing, it is necessary to explain away the former ground of quarrel. Thus Mr. Isaac commences his preface, as might be expected, by telling us, "It is well known that he was not satisfied with every thing done by the trustees and preachers in reference to the organ question, and the disputes which arose out of it;"—and which disputes led to the divisions at Leeds and elsewhere. So far then Mr. Isaac and the people were agreed; viz. that all was not right at Leeds. But then there was no hope for Mr. Isaac within the walls of Conference, so long as he held these sentiments. He has therefore luckily discovered, that "whatever the errors of the preachers may be, they are errors of the judgment and not of the heart." This was the *half turn*: now for the *right-about-face*. "Those ministers are surely to be pitied, who are neither allowed to profess infallibility, nor to make a mistake!" We know not whether these tactics will be deemed by the Conference a sufficient purgation of Mr. Isaac; or whether they may not still look with shyness and distrust on a man who has so recently come over from the ranks of their opponents. The people, undoubtedly, have gained by the knowledge of his character; and, in giving him up, may console themselves that he will make but an awkward recruit in the ranks of his new friends, especially as he questions still the soundness of their heads, and entertains no respect for their judgment. Admitting their hearts to be on a par with his own, he thinks that their errors of the head, indeed, are "not of sufficient magnitude to justify a separation." Yet it is "well known that for many years he has been opposing and contending with them; so that they have a quarrelsome companion at best, and one who is determined nevertheless, to stick to them. One who has always felt himself at liberty to question their judgment and oppose their measures; but who sees nothing in their hearts, (or perhaps in his own interest,) that will justify a separation.

This commencement between Mr. Isaac and his new friends, however, is somewhat ominous. They are in no humour, we apprehend, to admit themselves mistaken; and will not thank Mr. Isaac for setting them down as objects "to be pitied." The people, indeed, could as readily forgive an "*error of the head*" as Mr. Isaac; but this, we believe, is the first *public* acknowledgment that any such error has been committed. The Conference voted "*almost unanimously*" that the proceedings of the Leeds Special District Meeting

were "constitutional under the regulations of 1797;" and, thanking that meeting for its conduct, they reiterated the *principles* on which that conduct was founded, as Methodistical law. Has Mr. Isaac authority from the Conference for revoking that decision as erroneous? Nay, is he himself honest in talking about "errors of the head and not of the heart?" Does he not claim for the preachers, as *evangelists*, those very powers, the exercise of which constituted the sole ground of the present controversy? Let the Conference admit that they erred in judgment; let them revoke their past decisions and assure us that in future they will respect the ceded rights of the people, and the connexion will instantly be at peace. But it is because both the Conference and Mr. Isaac, now enlisted in the train of despotism, persist in claiming the right to act independently of the leaders' meetings, in the admission and expulsion of members and local officers, and because, swelling in the exuberance of their ghostly power, they deny all rights of the local jurisdictions, so solemnly conceded in 1797;—it is because, when this error is clearly and forcibly pointed out, they persist in agitating and rending the connexion, in the struggle to maintain it, and will acknowledge no mistake nor retrace a single step they have taken;—it is on this account that the people justly suspect their *hearts* as well as their *heads*; and think, indeed, that those ministers are to be pitied, who will neither, *when allowed*, profess *infallibility*, nor acknowledge a *mistake*.

There are other points in difference between Mr. Isaac and the friends he would now court, as intimated by his enologist in the Magazine, which may render the coalition an uneasy one. We shall have more out bye and bye. But at present the exigencies of "THE PARTY," induce them to puff off and applaud every thing, however unpalatable even to themselves, which is written against the people. They will agree, in fact, but in this one point, to trample down the people; and the people will learn in turn, to rely only on themselves; for it would be difficult indeed for them to find a true and sincere defender of their rights in "the sacred conclave of the holy fathers."

Mr. Isaac, like the rest of his brethren, has not found it *convenient* to enter largely into the dispute which occasioned the secession of so many hundred members at Leeds and elsewhere. "He is waiting," he says, "for plausible answers to Messrs. Watson, Welch and Beecham." From this his readers will presume that he has never seen or heard of the "Reply to the affectionate address to the Rev. Richard Watson." Until that "Reply," and the "Address of the London south circuit," be answered, to use his own expression, "little more need be said on that side of the question."

Although Mr. Isaac contends for other, and very different tests, to try the fealty of local preachers and leaders to their spiritual lords; yet he is content to bring the rules of Protestant Methodism to the test of Holy Scripture. To this test of course no exception can be taken; and it remains, therefore, only to be seen how far Mr. Isaac is competent to apply that test; and whether his notions and theory of evangelistic power, as a perpetual institution in the church, have any foundation in the New Testament.

The first point to which we shall direct our particular attention is, his assumption of the powers of an evangelist of the New Testament. These powers he claims for himself and his brethren, the "*itinerant*" Methodist ministers; maintaining that evangelists were appointed as *permanent* officers in the church, and that he and his brethren, the "*itinerant*" ministers, being their successors, are invested with their authority.

We believe that all our divines who have written on the subject have classed the prophets, apostles and evangelists together, as *extraordinary* officers in the church, and of *temporary* appointment. Mr. Isaac admits that "*apostles* and *prophets* were *extraordinary* and *temporary* officers." But, he says, "the office of *evangelist* *MUST* be *permanent*." "Of these *permanent* officers, then, the *evangelist* stands *first*." (page 2.) It is surprising to see a writer come forward with the unwarranted confidence manifested by that gentleman. Not one word of proof has he furnished in support of this bold assertion, upon which he raises his whole superstructure of ministerial power; and yet before we come to the bottom of page 4 of his pamphlet, he says, "Let us now inquire into the prerogatives (prerogatives too!) of the *evangelists of holy writ*. We have *seen* that they are placed in the first rank of *permanent officers*." How ready is he to "inquire into these *prerogatives*," and to claim them! But he should first produce his title to them. It is true that HE says, "We have *SEEN* that they (the evangelists) are placed in the first rank of *permanent officers*." (page 4.) But let the reader turn to his pages, and examine, from the first to the fourth page, whether it can be "*SEEN*" from argument or scripture, that evangelists are *permanent* officers. There is not a single argument adduced; and notwithstanding this, the writer, at page 4, commences his inquiry into the *prerogatives of the evangelists*! and proceeds running a parallel be-

tween the *evangelist of holy writ*, and every *itinerant* minister, or missionary of the present day; claiming for the latter, *all the authority* of the former! In the absence of scripture proof and argument, how then is it "*SEEN*" in Mr. Isaac's pamphlet that evangelists are permanent officers? Why, in the following very curious manner. "Mr. Tucker," he says, "considers the terms, *itinerant* ministers, *evangelists*, and *ministers*, as synonymous; and *so must your people generally*; for as missionaries are not once mentioned in the New Testament, if the word did not mean the same as *itinerant* ministers, or *evangelists*, you would stand chargeable with appointing an order of officers not recognized by the Christian Revelation. I shall, therefore, in the following remarks, use these terms interchangeably, as of similar import."

Here, then, at the commencement of his pamphlet, Mr. Isaac *assumes* that evangelists are *permanent* officers in the church; or, to use his own words, it is "*SEEN*" that they are so, *FIRST*, because *Mr. Tucker* has employed the terms "*itinerant minister*," and "*evangelist*," as synonymous; and "*therefore*," *SECONDLY*, *Mr. Isaac* uses the terms "*interchangeably*, as of similar import." This is a very pretty way of establishing his claim to "*all the powers and prerogatives of an evangelist of the New Testament*." And is it because there may be a correspondence in *some parts* of the office of an evangelist, and that of an *itinerant minister*, or *missionary*, that, therefore, each one of the latter may claim *all the authority of the former*? This is logic with a witness, and must forsooth be convincing to every man.

The local preachers in the Methodist connexion may, on the same ground, set up their claims to *all the powers and prerogatives* for which Mr. Isaac contends, for they also have been considered "*evangelists*," when their claims as *pastors* have been denied. They have not, perhaps, been so "*considered by Mr. Tucker*" or by *Mr. Isaac*; but by one whose knowledge of the various offices in Methodism, and whose influence in Conference, constitute him an authority on this point—we allude to the Rev. Jabez Bunting. In his notices to correspondents, when editor of the Methodist Magazine, in 1823, which notices now lie before us, he says, "A true Methodist must perceive, if he reflects, that the subject on which he writes involves many grave questions of church discipline, for the discussion of which a magazine is by no means the most eligible medium. That the evil to which he alludes (the neglect in certain places of the regular administration of the sacrament, &c.) is felt to a great extent, we much doubt. Where it does exist, it is the fault, not of our system, but of the individuals who administer it; and it might, in almost every instance, be effectually removed, (if proper efforts were made for the purpose,) without breaking down those regulations, which arise, in our opinion, out of the very nature of the *pastoral* office, and are, as *general rules*, essential to the good order of our community. The persons to whom our correspondent refers, (the local preachers) though eminently useful in their station, as '*evangelists*,' are not our recognized *PASTORS*." But surely, Mr. Bunting would not for a moment, while regarding the local preachers "eminently useful in their station, as *evangelists*," think of claiming for them "*all the powers and prerogatives of the evangelists of the New Testament*," any more than Mr. Tucker and the Protestant Methodists would think of doing so in behalf of the missionaries employed among them. And yet this is what Mr. Isaac does, without any scriptural authority!

After jumping to his rash conclusion, Mr. Isaac then proceeds—"The next point of inquiry shall be, which of these two orders (the *evangelist* and the *elder*) has precedence in the word?" (page 2,) and he of course discerns that precedence is to be assigned to the *evangelist*. He might also have discovered that the apostles had precedence of the evangelists, which would have been as much to the purpose; for if both were *extraordinary* offices, peculiar to the apostolic age; and neither of them appointed as a *permanent* order of ministers in the church, it is of no consequence which were first in order; and Mr. Isaac might with as much propriety claim all the powers of an apostle as those of an evangelist. His first point should have been to shew that the evangelists of the New Testament were a *permanent* order of ministers; then there might be some ground for his pretensions. Otherwise, what will his empty declaiming avail. "The evangelist Titus had authority to expel improper members." "The evangelists had a power to elect others as their coadjutors and successors." "It is equally plain that Timothy was directed to exercise control over the funds of the poor widows at Ephesus." "Your *evangelists* have no official authority to execute the smallest portion of the church's discipline, whereas the *evangelists of holy writ* were entrusted with the whole of it." "To the discretion of your *evangelists* nothing is left; to the discretion of the *New Testament evangelists* every thing was entrusted," &c. Why

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did not Mr. Isaac ring these changes upon the word "apostle." He would then have been invested with higher powers; for no doubt those who will admit the claims he has set up as an evangelist, would as readily admit his claims to apostleship. Mr. Beecham, notwithstanding his blunders, and comparing the Methodist Conference to the high court of parliament, &c. has not run wild with Mr. Isaac respecting his power *as an evangelist*. On this point he very properly states, that "the evangelist was one of those *extraordinary officers* which were created by the head of the church, to introduce and establish Christianity in the world." (p. 108.)

We had prepared a list of quotations from our principal commentators, in order to show that their uniform testimony is, that evangelists were *extraordinary officers* in the church, *peculiar to the apostolic age*. But as many of these quotations have now been published in a review of Mr. Isaac's pamphlet, commenced in the Protestant Magazine for May last, it may be deemed sufficient to refer to them as they stand in that publication. We shall, however, add the following testimony of Mr. Watson on this point, in a work just published, entitled, "Conversations for the young, &c." "Evangelists," says Mr. Watson, "acted as the delegates of the apostles, and by them were vested with authority to regulate the affairs of the churches, to repress disorders, and to ordain ministers over them. As for their authority, it appears to have been derived from the apostles, and their office to have expired at their own death; *certain it is, that the term evangelist does not describe a permanent order of ministers, because the apostle left no direction to them to ordain successors.*" (page 379.)

Now what has Mr. Isaac shown to the contrary of this? It is true that, after having assumed the point at issue, in pages 1 and 2, and after having proceeded, upon that assumption, "to inquire," in page 4, "into the prerogatives of the evangelists;" he attempts to enter upon something like proof in page 7; but he has hardly commenced, before he flies off at a tangent, and cannot meet the point. The following paragraph, commencing at the bottom of page 7, is the only place where he feigns to make an attempt to prove his position.

"The evangelists had power to elect others as their coadjutors and successors. Timothy and Titus, and many other evangelists, were chosen by the apostles; not by a committee of elders, as yours are. But as the apostles could not continue by reason of death, and as they appointed evangelists to assist them in founding and governing the churches, it was matter of importance to know how these things were to be managed when the apostles should be taken to their reward. Upon this subject, St. Paul instructs Timothy. 'The things which thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' 2 Tim. ii. 2. This shows that the evangelist's office was to be perpetuated in the church, and to be conferred by evangelists. Here the Protestants are outrageous against us for following the Scripture plan." (pp. 7-8.)

Let us now examine this paragraph, and we shall see with what art and sophistry it is drawn up, and how well it is calculated to deceive plain, unlettered, and simple-hearted men. Mr. Isaac, like every other sophist, has so selected and arranged his terms, that he shall have a loop hole through which he may creep, if charged with advancing a position which he cannot maintain. And hence we find him thus adroitly commencing his paragraph; "The evangelists had power to elect others as their coadjutors and successors." Mr. Isaac must have known that this proposition was beside the mark; but it would open to him a field for quibbling with any opponent he might meet. It matters not what power the evangelists had, if it was not exercised. Mr. Isaac's proposition should have been, that the evangelists *DID elect other evangelists as their coadjutors and successors*; this would have been meeting the argument. But does Mr. Isaac attempt to show in any fair way that the apostles invested them with this power, and gave them instructions to ordain such successors? No; but immediately after making the above assertion, he shifts his ground, and says, "Timothy and Titus, and many other evangelists were chosen by the *apostles*; not by a committee of elders as yours are." Nobody will dispute with Mr. Isaac that "Timothy and Titus" were chosen by the "*apostles*"; but this is no proof that the *evangelists* had power to ordain *evangelists* as coadjutors and successors; much less that they did so. All that Mr. Isaac proves is, that the Evangelists were chosen by the "*apostles*," and not by "*evangelists*," any more than "*a committee of elders*." In the absence of any proof by Mr. Isaac, we must still say with Mr. Watson, that "the apostles left no direction to them (the evangelists) to ordain successors."

(To be concluded in our next.)

## TO THE EDITORS.

## GENTLEMEN,

If you consider the following of any interest, it is at your service. For some time past the Methodist Society in this town has partaken of the same feeling which is now agitating the societies in every part of the kingdom, and although here it has not broken out with the violence it has in many places, nor caused a division or separation to an alarming extent, yet dissatisfaction is both loud and deep. The lover of Methodism views it extending with apprehension and sorrow—the sincere and saudine mind anxiously watches the movements of men in power, and fondly hopes the next day will disclose some healing measure to cure the wounds which tyranny has made. Hitherto expectation has been disappointed—and when we looked for conciliation, coercion was exercised—and for kindness, chastisement and rebuke. But if the iron hand of Conference power has not provoked resistance, the increasing debt of the circuit, and the weight of trustee responsibility, bids fair to open the eyes, and raise the sleeping energies, of our respectable and influential friends. Some time ago the society prospered, and possessed a fund to meet expenses; all our chapels have been re-built or enlarged—and an addition of one in the town—a supernumerary preacher was engaged, and a young (additional) preacher solicited, but by the last March Quarterly Meeting a debt of nearly £100 had accumulated; and at Conference a married preacher was expected, and a house must be taken and furnished—but, as honest men, they paused and counted the cost. It was therefore determined to petition Conference to continue the young preacher, though contrary to law. At the last quarterly meeting the debt was £110, and the decision of the former meeting was confirmed as to rejecting a married man. Conference has complied to station again a single preacher for Birmingham! The debts on our chapels are nearly as follows:—

Cherry-street.....	£4000	Islington.....	£1400
Belmont-row.....	3000	Wesley Chapel.....	1600
Bradford-street...	4000		£14000

This is about the total amount of debts on the chapels in Birmingham, the members of society in the *whole* circuit are not 2000, and Wesley chapel is, I believe, the only one that pays its way with anything like ease. It would be well if you could procure a list of debts of all the chapels and circuits in the kingdom; the liability of trustees would, perhaps, do more to teach them wisdom than anything else.

Peace! peace! peace! may be echoed by Conference; but there is not peace within the walls of Methodism, nor, indeed, is there any prospect of it at present. Will Conference continue to close both eyes and ears to the representations of the society; will no measures bring the preachers to sanity, but downright division and separation? It is said that Conference have had a happy and pleasant meeting, and there existed no cause of complaint but the state of the funds! and what can reflect higher credit on the temper and forbearance of the people? they complain, and I venture to affirm, there is not a preacher in the connexion of any experience, who will not admit this. Yet such is the attachment of the people to the institutions of Methodism, that they still remain, and refuse to leave them, sanctioning a hope that ere long, justice will be done them; they, therefore, abstain from subscribing to the extent they would, were their rights again restored—and so far they do right. I conceive we do right in refusing supplies for any purpose than is just necessary to carry on those establishments which are for spiritual profit—let extras only be given when the preachers in their *collective capacity* know how to regard the privileges of those who support them.

I am, Gentlemen, your's truly,

Birmingham, 11th Aug. 1830. ALPHA.  
\* \* \* We shall feel obliged by our correspondents complying with the hint given in the above letter respecting chapel debts.—EDITORS.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- *ITHMAH'S* questions are answered in the article on *Church Government* in this number
- *EPSILON* has our hearty thanks for his communications.
- *COMMON SENSE* on the *Sacrament*, will probably be inserted next month.
- *X. T.* of *Barnsley*, on *Preachers' Salaries*, is received; we thank him for the hint.
- *ONESIMUS* is received.
- *QUERIST* is unavoidably postponed.

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# The Circular

TO  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. X.

31ST OCTOBER, 1830.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

\* \* The article promised on the immense sums expended in Methodism, and the increase which might reasonably be expected from such a mighty engine if properly conducted, is unavoidably postponed.

## THE CHURCH GOVERNMENT OF WESLEYAN METHODISM.

*(Continued from page 70 of our last Circular.)*

V. Accustomed to view Methodism in a broad light, and intimately acquainted with her internal organization, we have throughout regarded the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, as nothing more than the formal acknowledgment, by the Conference, of some of the leading principles of that essential constitution, on which this vast and wide-spreading association has been founded and reared. Whatever may be the deficiencies, the crudities and the defects of written treaties, it does not follow that these defects belong to the essential constitution of Wesleyan Methodism. Indeed, it is not possible that a constitution gradually formed and slowly rising to maturity,—of which every feature was the offspring of impelling circumstance, and the result of tried experience;—a constitution which at an early period could brave the shocks, and sustain the conflicts, of the most powerful parties; and which was destined to inspire the genius, and form the character and habits of a great people;—it is not possible but that such a constitution must contain within itself a very large class of conservative principles, and such an equipoise of parties and interests, as shall effectually secure it against any sudden overthrow, and make the very storms and tempests to which it is exposed contribute to its increasing vigour and stability. It has happened, and occasionally it will happen, that an excess of impulse imparted to some of our institutions has caused them to flourish beyond the just proportions of a healthy state, and, in consequence, the nourishment being withdrawn, or partially withdrawn, from other parts of the system, these in turn have declined and drooped. But these irregular impulses can be but temporary, and are always followed by re-action. Like the mouths of rivers when glutted with the tide, the current of the natural stream is suspended; but, when the lunar influence is withdrawn, the turbid waters quickly subside, and the lucid wave pursues its wonted course.

The confluence of opposing interests; the action and reaction of irregular and conflicting impulses, the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism can very well sustain; if it

were not for the treacherous attacks of organized parties, who, incapable of estimating their own happiness and welfare as connected with the public good, and short-sighted as they are selfish, watch for these periods of agitation and trial solely with the view of procuring to themselves a preponderating influence.

It is not our intention at present to enter into a discussion on the present state of parties in the connexion at large. Nor is the time yet come for a full exposure of that Conference faction which has spread itself on the bosom of the constitution with the influence of the nightmare. A sincere and earnest regard for the real interests of Methodism, and a deep-rooted aversion to every thing that tends to dissolution and division, restrains us from prematurely rending the veil. For the present, therefore, a few general remarks must suffice.

Of the three classes, the trustees, the leaders, and the local preachers, whose interests are chiefly affected by the recent measures of the Conference, the trustees in 1795 and 1797, were looked up to as the most competent and proper to maintain the rights of the laity, and to treat with the Conference. This was natural and proper in many important respects. 1. The trustees (of that period especially) were the most respectable class, in regard to general information and property. 2. They and their families had largely contributed to the public property of the connexion, and its chapels were vested in them as trustees. 3: They comprised a fair proportion of the two other classes; many of them sustaining in their own persons the two offices of trustee and leader, or trustee and local preacher, 4. As they had been appointed by legal instruments, the chapel deeds, they could only be removed in conformity with those documents, and by consent of their co-trustees. They were therefore above the reach of arbitrary power, and the "inherent rights" were a mere bubble to them. 5. Their character and station, their known and tried attachment to Methodism, the liberality with which they had supported it, and the strenuous efforts they had made in her behalf, conspired to furnish a security that they would not carry matters too far;—that their great object would be a just and equitable settlement between the Conference and the people; and that in all their demands they would consult the true interests and honour of the connexion. 6. All these considerations imparted to the trustees an influence and authority in the circuits and societies which the Conference itself could not

resist. The delegates assembled, armed with the instructions and authority of their constituents, whose sentiments had been previously expressed in local meetings specially convened. The Conference felt themselves compelled to treat these heads of houses with deference and respect, and the treaties of 1795 and 1797, were therefore speedily effected.

Now this is the true provision which Methodism makes for "extraordinary emergencies." She knows nothing of the novel invention of the district police; nor of the popish attributes of a superintendent. If a case had really occurred (which we firmly deny) in which the majority of the local officers, had cast off their allegiance to Methodism, and to which the fundamental laws of the connexion were inapplicable, the Conference should have called for a new assembly of delegates, that the new law might have been settled *constitutionally* between the Conference and the people. The unhallowed decrees of ambition and despotism ought not to have been *first* inflicted on the Leeds people, and *then* enforced on the whole connexion, on the sole authority and arbitrary dictation of a faction-ruled Conference. What authority can there be in laws thus enacted; or, how can there be peace and prosperity, whilst this degrading system is tolerated.

If the above, then, be the true provision of constitutional Methodism, (and it is the very principle on which the constitution was settled—higher authority or sounder precedent cannot be adduced in Methodism than the treaties of 1795 and 1797) how comes it to pass that the present race of trustees have tamely stood by and seen all the labours of their predecessors and all the liberties of the connexion sacrificed to the most lawless and despotic faction that ever reared its front within the pale of Methodism. Why, after the perpetration of the Leeds business, and the publication of the "official documents," did they not immediately assemble in every circuit, elect their delegates, and appoint them to meet at the same time and place with the Conference of 1828?—or, if this were deemed precipitate, why have three successive Conferences been permitted to assemble, without any assembly of these natural and constitutional guardians of our liberties and privileges?

It is much easier to account for, than to justify, the conduct of the present race of trustees. The duty of preserving, and of handing down to posterity, unimpaired, those liberties, which "the giants" of 1795 and 1797 so nobly asserted and maintained, was a far more sacred trust, and of infinitely higher obligation, than that of the property vested in them by their trust deeds; but, under the paralysing influence of one of those reactions to which we have referred, duty has been sacrificed to interest, and the great concern of the trustees has been to patch up a hollow peace by a tame subserviency.

After the settlement in 1797, the societies greatly prospered, and Methodism continued to spread itself in all the towns and villages of the empire. Good men, whose hearts were engaged in the work, continued to exert themselves to meet the growing exigencies of so many new and increasing societies, by the erection of suitable chapels in places where they were most urgently required. So long as the growing interests of Methodism took the lead and imperatively demanded these exertions, there was no danger to be apprehended, because there was always a flourishing society to indemnify the trustees, and to defray, by gradual and unrestrained efforts, the expense of the building.

But towards the close of the late war, and during a

period of general prosperity, a rage for chapel building broke out in the connexion, which far outstrip the wants of Methodism, and astonished the world with a display of opulence and magnificence unsuspected in the followers of John Wesley. The impulse, once given in this direction, nothing could arrest its progress until it had spent its force. Not only were chapels built for poor congregations, which in splendour eclipsed the Dissenters and vied with the Establishment; but, in many instances, expensive buildings were erected in places where we had scarcely any society at all, and where Methodism was not destined to prevail. The enormous cost of these numerous and daily multiplying erections could never be drawn from the pockets of the people; but the credit of the trustees, or rather of Methodism, was good; and the "bank of faith" poured in money, even beyond what was required, on the security of the simple men who thus involved themselves and their families in the popular delusion of the day.

At length came the re-action. The income from these chapels would not meet the current expenditure. Extraordinary means must be resorted to. The societies were whipped and spurred for money; and, under this discipline, as might be expected, instead of prosperity and increase, they declined, in many instances, both in numbers and respectability. A noble chapel, with a heavy debt, and a depressed and declining society, were natural concomitants. In the end the distress became general. In nearly every circuit there were chapels, the accruing interest and expense on which could not be met by any *local* efforts, however strenuous; and on which, therefore, the permanent debt was annually increased, instead of being reduced. This state of things was followed with bitter consequences to many families. Where the interest was not regularly paid, the principal was called in. Suits were instituted against trustees. Many individuals were compelled to make large sacrifices of their own property; and, in some instances, families have been known to emigrate, in order to avoid their liabilities for the public debt of Methodism.

The Conference, to whose exclusive use all these chapels had been, with great simplicity, secured, finding itself assailed on all hands with the cry of distress, at length established the **GENERAL CHAPEL FUND**, as a measure of general relief. This fund is raised by private subscription, and public collections, throughout the connexion. It is administered by a mixed committee of preachers and laymen, under regulations dictated and enforced by the Conference alone. Of the operation of this fund, and the manner in which it is administered, we shall avail ourselves of other opportunities of treating. We inserted on this subject a letter from a correspondent in our number for July, being No. VII. of this 'CIRCULAR'; and, referring to that letter, we shall for the present content ourselves with remarking, that the committee is appointed by the Conference; that it holds its sittings during, and in immediate communication with, the Conference; that the majority of its members are members of the Conference; and that this committee acknowledges the absolute right of the Conference to impose, revise, alter and modify, from time to time, the regulations by which all its operations are to be directed. The chapel fund committee, therefore, is the mere puppet, tool, and instrument of the Conference; and an admirable instrument it is, for teaching the trustees their duty, and for measuring out to them that degree of relief, which it is deemed safe and prudent to extend to them.

In the above circumstances of the chapels, and in the general operation of the chapel fund, we have the true causes why a class of Laymen, who in 1797 were the most intelligent, respectable and independent in Methodism, and to whom, therefore, she very properly confided the preservation and defence of her liberties, are now become paralysed and depressed. No longer, (as they imagine themselves) in a situation to maintain either their own rights, or those of the people, they are prepared to submit to almost any measures which the Conference may please to adopt. Instead therefore of witnessing the trustees or their delegates assembled to call the Conference to account and restore the law of Methodism, we see them hanging around the doors of that august assembly to implore aid from the chapel fund ! and, in order that they may duly feel the condition to which they are reduced, when they have gone through all the requisite forms, and their claim is at length admitted, then comes the tardy grant, accompanied with the condition that the trustees advance cent per cent with the treasurer of the fund, to procure a partial relief from the public burthen. This grinding system, so ruinous to private families, is what the trustees have gained by committing their affairs to the management of the Methodist Conference. Had they, instead of appealing to Conference, formed a society amongst themselves, and through committees and sub-committees in every circuit and society, made their appeal to a generous public, affording in personal character and by judicious regulations, proper security for the due application of the fund, they would, in our opinion, have raised more money and have escaped their present humiliations.

Our correspondent, L., will perhaps here be ready to exclaim that his case is made out and admitted by ourselves ; that the trustees, the natural and constitutional guardians of our liberties and privileges, being thus paralysed and incapable of acting as in 1797, the constitution has thus really "slipped through the hands of the people." But this, again, would be by far too hasty a conclusion. So surely as the troubled waters of the lake, whatever be their undulations, must ultimately repose on their proper level—so must the affairs of Methodism. The trustees are depressed ; and, communicating their timidity and fears to other classes in every circuit, it is their influence, more than any thing else, which keeps down the general expression of the public sentiment. But there is still much good sense and some remains of noble and generous feeling in the great body of the trustees throughout the kingdom. Many of them have penetration to discover that in submitting to this forced alliance with Conference, they have assumed a position as false as it is unnatural, and although they have not yet the resolution to break the chain which enslaves them, they wear it with irritation and impatience, and feel themselves very much galled and chafed by it.

The *true*, and *only safe* position, in which the trustees of Methodist chapels can ever stand, is that natural and proper one which they occupied in 1797, when, in close alliance with the people, they nobly asserted and maintained the public liberties. The position which they now occupy, and which, with some generous exceptions, (for there are individuals who will always act on higher principles than those of self-interest) may be regarded as an alliance with the Conference against the liberties of the connexion, is false, both as it respects the Conference and the people.

It is false as it respects the Conference ; that is, the hope of deliverance and relief which the trustees found on this adherence to Conference will fail them. In other words,

the Conference, even if they possessed the power, have neither the intention nor the disposition ever to afford the trustees effectual and permanent relief. The ruling party in the Conference understand their own interests too well to wish to see the trustees free and unshackled. They remember the trustees of 1795 and 1797. They know all what has created the difference between that and the present race of trustees. It is the overwhelming amount of the chapel debts in every circuit. The Conference, indeed, cannot wish to see the trustees and their families utterly ruined ; and therefore they have established the chapel fund. But they must retain in their own hands *exclusively* the regulation and application of this fund, and not only so, but they must retain a preponderating influence in the committee of distribution, by appointing a majority of preachers, members of that committee. Relief therefore may be had in extreme cases, the object being to keep the chins of the trustees above water and prevent their sinking ; but carefully prevent their gaining such a footing as might enable them to climb up the bank and feel themselves secure from danger. This is the essential principle of the general chapel fund. So long as by any possible means the local income can be made to meet the interest of the monies borrowed, there can be no relief from the fund, although not a shilling should remain for the necessary expense of cleaning and lightening the chapel. Reduction of the principal debt, except in some extreme cases, is out of the question ; and, even in such cases, the relief is so proportioned as to leave the debt still as the trustees can barely sustain.

We frankly admit, as in fairness we are bound to do, that the limited amount of the fund, compared with the object for which it is raised, is such as to render a very rigid ministration of it absolutely necessary. If, therefore, standing regulations of the chapel fund were equitable and founded *solely* and *exclusively* upon this consideration, there could be no reasonable complaint. But, unfortunately, we are furnished with evidence of the disposition of Conference and of their policy on this subject ; and are confirmed in an opinion, long and deliberately formed, that neither general chapel fund, nor any other fund under the regulation and direction of the Methodist Conference, will ever be permitted to extend to the permanent and effectual release of the trustees.

That evidence the Conference itself has furnished in regulations which it has adopted, in regard to the general chapel fund. That fund was established in 1818 ; the express object of its formation was the relief of the trustees of distressed chapels. Upon this plea the people were implored and exhorted to give of their liberality, and the sum was readily admitted, for the sympathies which unite this great family are strong and generous. The fund became popular, and the subscriptions increased from year to year until they reached to nearly £4000, and with every prospect of a still growing and rapid increase. It is true that this amount, had it even been increased fourfold, would have been very inadequate to provide for the gradual charge of the *MILLIONS* of debt, secured on the various chapels of the connexion, and the interest on which, in many places, could not be met by the most strenuous efforts and painful sacrifices of the trustees and their friends. It was enough to alarm the ruling party in the Conference who saw it necessary instantly to place a limit on this fund, lest it should really increase to an amount, which might gradually redeem the trustees, and free them from the present subjection.

## THE CIRCULAR

To effect this object they had recourse to their legislative power, and, in 1823, passed the following regulations :

" 1. That in future, after a rigorous examination of all cases proposed to the committee for relief, the sum of **3000 ONLY**, shall be allowed for *annual deficiencies*."

" 2. That all the money collected above that sum, to the amount of £1000 (!!!) shall be appropriated to the reduction of *principal*; the most distressed chapels having the first claim; but subject to such terms and conditions as the committee may deem most advisable."

" 3. That when the annual collections and subscriptions to this fund shall amount to considerably more than £1000, that surplus shall be employed in *grants* to aid the building of **NEW CHAPELS**, in the most promising places, in different parts of the kingdom, under such regulations as the general committee shall deem reasonable and practicable." Minutes of Conference, 1823.

It was not to be expected, in the present state of the connexion, that a fund "*to aid the building of NEW chapels*" is likely to meet with much countenance. The only effect of the last of the above regulations must therefore be to prevent the fund from ever rising "to considerably more than £4000." And although this might not be the effect intended; although it might be very agreeable to Conference to have **NEW CHAPELS** erected "in different parts of the kingdom," yet their main object is fully realized; as it is put to the relief of the trustees; and such a limit admirably meets the policy of the case; viz. to preserve the trustees from drowning, without lifting them out of the water.

We need not enter on an estimate of the enormous amount of the chapel debts, to show that the sum thus apart is utterly inadequate to discharge even the arrears interest annually accumulating. We appeal to facts which are before the connexion. The fund has now been in operation 12 years. Many chapels have been relieved. Is it a relief from onerous debt, and from strenuous exertion; or is it only a relief from utter ruin and despair? the mean time, is the connexion at large relieved from its burthen? Are not our ears still assailed with the cry of distress from all quarters? Are there not yet very many chapels, the income from which cannot by any possibility be made to equal the expenditure? And are not members of our trustees in jeopardy every hour of being led to prison for the debts of the connexion? And if this be the case in 1830, was it a time in 1823, to limit the fund from which relief was to flow? Was there any anger, at that period, that the great object for which the chapel fund was instituted, would be too speedily accomplished, and that a surplus would remain for the building of new chapels? The eagerness to limit the fund at such a period, sufficiently discovers the motive. Why limit the fund so long as the primary objects of its formation imperiously demand its support, and to an extent so far beyond its capacity to afford? We pity the understanding of the man, who, after weighing these facts, can ever hope that the Conference will devise efficient and permanent relief for the trustees of Methodist chapels. In abandoning the interests of the people, and placing themselves at the mercy of the Conference, the trustees have chosen a false position for Methodism; and one which will disappoint their hopes and expectations.

That position is equally false as it regards the people. No one has read the accounts of the efforts made to save the trustees of Brunswick chapel, in this town, as

furnished by the letter of Mr. John Scott to the editor of the Methodist Magazine, and published in May last, must be convinced that the real strength and support of the trustees is not with the Conference but with the people. Every other instance of permanent and effectual relief afforded to trustees, will go to establish the same fact. Relief from the chapel fund has always been partial and inadequate, and it ever will be so. Even whilst writing the above, we have information that notwithstanding appeals to the Conference and to the chapel fund, the trustees of a chapel in the neighbourhood of London have just been served with writs; and this is far from being a solitary case. The trustees throughout the kingdom will have ample opportunity of estimating the effects of a timid and servile policy, which has led them tacitly to sacrifice the liberties of the people, and to enlist themselves in the train of their oppressors.

Multitudes of our people, from a superficial knowledge of the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, were of opinion with our correspondent L, that it was deficient in securities, and that it had really "slipped through the hands of the people." They did not perceive that the defect lay, not in the constitution, but in the dereliction of the trustees, whose duty it was to maintain it. In this case, the constitution is not lost, for, as we have seen, the people will not give it up—"the people will not thus submit." The operation of the counteracting and conservative principles must be slow; but they will be sure. The trustees succumb before the Conference; they submit to see the fundamental laws trampled under foot; and the new system of absolutism and the district police developed, and acted upon, on a grand scale, at Leeds; and they are willing even to receive, with all gravity and homage, "the recognized pastor and evangelist," clothed in all his novel attributes and newly defined powers. And why is this? Because their interests are deeply involved; and because, inadequate though it be to meet their wants, they still cling to the chapel fund, as administered by the Conference, as their only ultimate resource. The effect of this was not seen at the first; and, probably, it is not yet generally perceived by the people. But it has forced itself on the attention of many intelligent men, in different parts; and many more are daily learning to trace the supineness of the trustees to the operations of the chapel fund. No sooner shall this conviction become general, than the evil will remedy itself. The supplies which feed the chapel fund are derived solely from the pockets of the people. The Conference is but an agent between them and the trustees; and, when it is perceived that the chapel fund is one of the main instruments of oppression, it will not long retain its popularity.

Of a general fund we greatly approve, provided it were regulated and administered by those *only* who have no other interest than in its right application. But when a third party, having no *direct* interest, is allowed to obtrude itself, and to direct the administration of the fund, in such a manner as to serve an interest directly opposed, not only to the liberties of the people, but to the fundamental laws of the connexion, we deem such a fund dangerous; and one from which every friend of constitutional Methodism should withhold his support. The trustees ought not to mistake us here, nor to think us opposed to their welfare. We are happy, to the extent of our means, to contribute to their relief. But when every shilling we subscribe, through the chapel fund, goes to forge an additional fetter to bind the people, we prefer confining our contributions to local

cases, in which the relief is direct; and in which we have not the mortification of seeing our money pass through the fingers of the agents of Conference, and administered so as to strengthen and support their unrighteous power.

The trustees throughout the kingdom ought already to be able to read the signs of the times, and to judge whether they are on the right side; or, whether, in thus abandoning the interest of the people, they have not assumed a false position. Already, for two successive years, has Methodism decreased in numbers, in about one half of the circuits in England! Partial revivals in other places have enabled the Conference to announce a small general increase; but for one half of the circuits to have decreased is a tolerably plain indication of the effect of the late measures of Conference on the connexion at large. That these measures, and the general disgust at the exclusive system of the Conference, are the true cause of the decrease cannot be doubted; for it occurs when all other churches, and especially those parties who have seceded from us, are rapidly increasing. The Protestant Methodists, with their very limited means, are enabled this year to report an increase, almost double to that of our whole connexion in Great Britain. The primitive Methodists, who separated from us a few years ago, have increased to upwards of 36,000. And the new connexion also formed by Mr. Kilham, rejoice in the prosperity which smiles on their borders. This proves that it is not Methodism, but only Conference Methodism, which droops and declines. And what will be the effect which this increasing discontent and gradual decrease of members will produce on the affairs of the trustees? This is no longer a problematic inquiry to be answered by speculation. It was too clearly intimated at the last Conference, by a falling off of nearly £300, in the annual amount of the Chapel fund!

Let the trustees consider these matters in their local meetings, and apart from the influence and representations of the preachers. Let them, instead of joining with the preachers to keep down the expression of a discontent which requires a remedy, and crying out that all is peace, consider that the consequences are but commencing; and that they will be progressive and certain. And, if they are capable of estimating their present situation, and acting like men, let them boldly put forth their sentiments, as in 1795 and 1797, in printed resolutions to be freely circulated throughout the connexion. They can do this more safely, and with better effect, than any other body of men; because, such are their interests, that they cannot be suspected of any other motive or object than the preservation, and not the injury or overthrow, of Methodism; when the trustees, preferring a great and general interest to a partial and selfish one, shall adopt this course, the Conference itself will be the first to wish to treat, and will readily agree to whatever can be fairly and honourably demanded.

But if the trustees should still cherish their fears, and shrink back from the call of the people, our faith is still in the Constitution, which will assuredly right itself. The Conference can bear to look on and witness the withering effects of their absolute system, and still maintain, in sullen pride, their unrighteous decrees. We have therefore no hope from them. Such is their infatuation, that, if left to themselves, we doubt not but like Charles X, and his ministers, they will persist until all is lost. But they cannot—they will not be left to themselves. The derangement of the system which they have occasioned, must press on every part of the machine. The mischief is first felt by those

against whom the pressure is directed; and Methodism must still suffer in its societies and circuits. But it has already reached, and must ultimately fall, with full effect, on the Conference funds. The truth is fast developing itself. It is perceived that the struggle to maintain these funds, as at present administered, is a struggle against the liberties of the connexion; and, that he who supports them, parts, not only with his money, but with his ceded rights and constitutional privileges, as a Methodist. It is equally the duty and the interest of both the Conference and the trustees to put an end to this state of things. The trustees might terminate it at once, for the Conference have neither a civil nor a military force, like Charles the X, to enforce contributions, and perpetuate the conflict. The longer, however this struggle shall last, the more deeply, in the end, will it be impressed on the hearts of the trustees and the preachers, that "**HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.**"

LIVERPOOL, 13th Oct. 1830.

THE EDITORS.

STRICTURES ON THE REV. DANIEL ISAAC'S PAMPHLET,  
ENTITLED

"*The Rules of the Protestant Methodists brought to the test of Holy Scripture, in a letter addressed to the members of that community.*"

(Continued from page 72 of our last Circular.)

Mr. Isaac still continues to shift his ground and to exercise his sophistry in the same manner, as he proceeds. "But as the apostles could not continue by reason of death, and as they appointed evangelists to assist them in founding and governing churches, it was matter of importance to know *how these things were to be managed when the apostles should be taken to their reward.*" Upon this subject St. Paul instructed Timothy. "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, *the same commit thou to faithful men*; who shall be able to teach others." II. Tim. ii. 2. "This shews that the evangelic office was to be perpetuated in the church, and to be conferred by evangelists. Here the Protestants are outrageous against us for following the Scriptural plan." p. p. 7-8.

This is a disgraceful attempt to beguile the unwary; and if this is the manner in which Mr. Isaac and his brethren are to establish their claim to "all the powers of the evangelists of the New Testament," the Protestants, as also every member of the Wesleyan Methodist connexion, may well be "outrageous." Mr. Isaac may with more justness call *his plan popish*, than "*Scriptural*." It is truly, as Mr. Isaac says, "matter of some importance to know how these things are to be managed when the apostles shall be taken to their reward." But how Mr. Isaac wishes things to be "managed" is too evident. Instead of furnishing his reader with a "Scriptural plan," he tenders one framed according to his own glosses; and this is what every popish priest does. But it is to be hoped we have not so learned Christ, as to submit to such dogmas. Let us then turn to the word and to the testimony, and not give heed to these seducing doctrines, though they come from one who makes *his boast* that he is an "evangelist!!" Mr. Isaac attempts to shew us how St. Paul instructed Timothy. "The things which thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, *the same commit thou to faithful men*, who shall be able to teach others." This is the text. Now for Mr. Isaac's comment. "This shews" says he, "that the evangelical office was to be perpetuated in the church, and to be conferred by the evangelists." Does it, indeed, shew any such thing?—Does it "shew" that the "faithful men," to whom Timothy was to commit the things he had heard, were to be "evangelists" like himself? If so, how was it that Timothy did not understand the apostle as clearly as Mr. Isaac does? We repeat, does the passage "shew," that Timothy was to appoint or ordain "evangelists" as permanent ministers in all the churches? This is the question. If Mr. Isaac does not mean to assert this, his gloss is mere quibbling; and but a part of that wretched sophistry by which he has attempted to blind his reader. Who these "faithful men" were, who were to be appointed in the churches is best known by referring to the corresponding advice given by Paul to Titus, and by comparing the conduct of the apostles in establishing the churches. St. Paul gives directions to Titus on the same point, in which he designates the persons, or "faithful men," spoken of to Timothy. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain **ELDERS** in *every* city, as I had appointed thee." Titus, i. 5. Here is not one word about "evangelists" being appointed in every city. Mr. Isaac has quoted this passage in page 7, and he there remarks

that "Timothy had a similar power;" and that "the description of the qualifications of *elders* and *deacons* was given to direct the conduct of *Timothy in the church*, in case the apostle should delay his visit." How came it then that the apostle did not give the description and qualification of the more important and arduous office of an "evangelist," if such were the "faithful men," whom Timothy had authority to appoint, and to whom he was to commit the things he had heard? It was not, then, the practice of the apostles and evangelists to appoint *evangelists* in every place as their successors, and as the permanent ministers of the word; but "when they had ordained them *ELDERS* in every church, and had prayed, with fasting, they commanded them to the Lord, on whom they believed." *Acts* xiv. 23.

We have now seen that Mr. Isaac's main position, viz. that the evangelists of the New Testament were appointed as a "permanent" order of ministers in the church is false; his conclusion, therefore, that he and his brethren can assume the power and authority with which the former were invested, must fall, and his fine superstructure of ministerial power and dominion be levelled to the ground.

In the preceding remarks, we have assumed that Mr. Isaac had dealt fairly with the text, 2 Tim. ii. 2. and that it referred to the ordination of evangelists; but surely no absurdity can be greater than this application of the passage. Let us read the text with Mr. Isaac; "The things thou has heard of me" (concerning ordaining evangelists) "among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men," (i. e., ordain a succession of evangelists) "who shall be able to teach others also," (viz. how to ordain evangelists.) Now, would it not have been wiser and better,—since the things here committed to faithful men, on this important subject, are now confessedly lost; and no church can furnish us with the exact manner, rites, and ceremonies of such an ordination;—would it not have been safer if, instead of this solitary injunction, the apostle had taken the trouble, in some one of his epistles, to set down the true ceremonial, and canonical investment of this perpetual order? Then all succeeding generations, instead of trusting to "faithful" men, who have proved unfaithful, might have been taught at once out of the book. But this method of perverting and trifling with the Scriptures is very awful! Let Mr. Isaac reflect on this! If he had wished to know the true sense of the passage, he has it in the marginal references of his Bible, which are as follows:—"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. i. 13., and "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." 2 Tim. iii. 10 and 14. These references also go not only to the subjects which were to be taught, but to the men by whom they were to be taught, viz. to the "bishops" or "elders," whom Timothy was instructed to ordain. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." 1 Tim. iii. 2. and by the laying on of whose hands, he himself received the gift that was in him. 1 Tim. iv. 14. How scandalous are these versions of the word of God!

II. We have shewn that the apostles appointed presbyters or elders, and who are sometimes styled bishops, in the New Testament, as the chief permanent officers in the church, and that the extraordinary officers of the primitive church had no successors. If Mr. Isaac could have proved that the evangelists of the New Testament had appointed evangelists in the church as their successors, endowed with the same power as themselves, surely he ought then, as an evangelist, to act according to the spirit and duty of his office, and to be guided by the example of his predecessors. Now what was the duty and work of an EVANGELIST? This Mr. Isaac has himself informed us in his Ecclesiastical Claims; a work from which we may quote with some degree of confidence, as containing Mr. Isaac's free and unbiased judgment on these points, for he has, in his recent letters, more than once referred to that work, and said, "as that book was published fifteen years ago, my opinion on the passage could not be founded on any bias, in relation to the present controversy." (First Letter, page 6.)

Mr. Isaac, in his Ecclesiastical Claims, contends that Timothy, the evangelist, was not made a *bishop* of the church universal; nor of a particular church; and, after urging his arguments in defence of this position, he gives the following quotation respecting Timothy's office, from Buck's Theol. Dictionary. "The power which Timothy exercised in the church of Ephesus was that of an *evangelist*, (2 Tim. iv. 5-9) and not fixed prelate. But, according to Eusebius, the *work* of an *evangelist* was to lay the foundations of the faith in barbarous nations, and to constitute among them *pastors*; after which he passed on to other countries." (Page 99.) This, then, is Mr. Isaac's adopted definition in his Eccle-

siastical Claims, of the work of an evangelist; and this agrees with that of our divines generally. He entertains similar views respecting the work of an apostle. He says, "An apostle could not be a *governor* of any particular church, consistent with his extraordinary commission, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. His business was not, when he had founded a church, to sit down and govern it; he either appointed officers, or left the brethren to manage their ecclesiastical concerns themselves, and went on, pursuant to the commission he had received, to preach the gospel in other places." Ecclesiastical Claims, p. 113.—Again, in another place he remarks, "The commission of the apostles included teaching and baptizing, but not a word about governing. When they had constituted a church in any place, instead of stopping to exercise the episcopal functions in it, they set off, according to their instructions, to break up new ground. It is easy to conceive, that when, in the course of their travels, they visited a church, their advice would be asked and followed upon many points; because THEY enjoyed the extraordinary inspiration of the spirit, and spoke the mind of CHRIST; but this no more proves that they are church governors, than that the counsellors of kings are kings themselves." Ibid, p. 83.

In pressing his arguments according to the foregoing view of the work of an evangelist, Mr. Isaac says, "But it is generally supposed that Timothy was made bishop of Ephesus. This pretence, however, is completely refuted in the following extract. 'It appears that the apostle Paul left in the church of Ephesus, which he had planted, no other successors to himself than presbyter-bishops, or presbyterian ministers,' (not a single evangelist) 'and that he did not devolve his power upon any prelate. Timothy, whom the episcopalians allege to have been the first bishop of Ephesus, was present when this settlement was made (Acts xx. 4, 5); and it was surely not to be supposed that, had he been their bishop, the apostle would have devolved the whole episcopal power upon the presbyters before his face.'\*\* Eccles. Claims, p. 98.

To be consistent then with himself, Mr. Isaac and his brethren should, as EVANGELISTS, as soon as they have established a church in any place, do as the apostle did, in the church at Ephesus; namely, devolve "the whole episcopal power upon the presbyters," and then, as EVANGELISTS, pass on to other places or countries. Oh! no, this would not suit Mr. Isaac's notions of an "evangelist" now! There must be none but his own order in office; and HE will not admit that even the *elders* or *presbyters* of the church at Ephesus had power to "expel immoral members," although the apostle "devolved the whole of the episcopal power upon the presbyters." "OUR evangelists," says Mr. Isaac, (meaning the travelling preachers,) "expel immoral members, as did Titus; and since we never read in the Bible that *elders* or leaders, and private members, performed this act of discipline, WE PROTEST against their doing it, as an usurpation of another's office." Letter, page 14.—We would ask Mr. Isaac, then, who had power to expel immoral members in the church at Ephesus, if the *presbyters* or *elders* had not; and how "the whole episcopal power" could have "devolved upon them," if they had no authority to perform "this act of discipline?" If none but evangelists can do this, the apostle must have been very short sighted, seeing that an evangelist could not be at all times present at all the churches he might establish, to perform this act, it being his work still to pass on and establish other churches. The *presbyters* or *elders* must therefore have had power to expel immoral members; and if Mr. Isaac will have it that the itinerant preachers are evangelists, then must they do as the apostle Paul, and the evangelist Timothy did, establish a *presbytery* in the churches they plant, vested with the powers of the *presbytery appointed at Ephesus*; otherwise it will be clear they have no wish to follow the *SCRIPTURE* model; but to be both *evangelists*, and *presbyters*, themselves,—in plain words, to be sole lords and masters over God's heritage.

If Mr. Isaac has a right to claim all the prerogatives of an evangelist of the New Testament, he has certainly none to rob the *presbyters* and *elders* of their power. To this principle of justice, and scriptural obedience, he has himself appealed, in his letter to the Protestant Methodists; although he seems frequently to lose sight of it, and is ever ready to do violence to it. "Whatever liberty," he says, "the New Testament grants, on the subject of church government, it gives no man, or body of men, authority to diminish the duties or privileges, which are attached to an office by the head of the church. Things which he has not settled are left to human prudence; but for us to presume to alter what he has ordained is impious, as though we were his superiors in wisdom and authority. Of this presumption your rulers are guilty, in reducing the evangelical office nearly to a cipher." (Page 28.) And we would add, has not Mr. Isaac been guilty of the like presumption, in denying to the *elders* of the *Bible* the right to expel immoral members?

\* Buck's Theol. Dict., Art. Presbyt.

It is evident the Protestant Methodists never thought, when they denominated their missionaries "evangelists," that they should be called upon to invest them with all the authority of the evangelists of the New Testament. They spoke of their missionaries as evangelists merely because they should be men engaged solely in proclaiming the word of life, this being the proper work of a missionary or evangelist. And this is the view Dr. Adam Clarke takes of an evangelist. In his commentary on 2 Tim. iv. 5, on the words, "do the work of an evangelist," he says, "That is, preach Christ crucified for the sins of the whole world; for *THIS, and this ALONE*, is doing the *work of an evangelist*, or preacher of the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ." This was, no doubt, the sense in which Mr. Bunting employed the term when he applied it to the *local* preachers. In this sense it may be very properly applied to the *travelling* preachers. And why may not the Protestant Methodists employ the term in like manner, without being charged with depriving men of rights, powers and privileges, which it would be ridiculous in them, as it is in Mr. Isaac, to claim. The Conference, with greater consistency, is charged with "presumption" in their attempts to diminish "the duties which are attached to an office by the Head of the church," by denying to the local preachers and leaders the rights and privileges attached inseparably to their office and calling by the Great Head of the church.

We remember an eloquent appeal made by the learned bishop Horsley, in one of his charges to the clergy of his diocese, wherein, after giving them particular directions with reference to their pulpit labours, he exclaimed, "Apply yourselves with the whole strength and power of your minds to do the *work of EVANGELISTS*. Proclaim to those who are at enmity with God, and children of his wrath, the glad tidings of Christ's pacification; sound the alarm to awaken to a life of righteousness, a world lost and dead in trespasses and sin; lift aloft the blazing torch of revelation, to scatter its rays over them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and guide the footsteps of the benighted wanderer into the paths of life and peace." IV. charge. The bishop here tells his clergy what it is to do "the *work of an evangelist*; and it accords with Dr. Adam Clarke's definition, already given. But what would have been the consequence had the Rev. Daniel Isaac been present, as one of the curates of his lordship's diocese? Would he not immediately have cried out—"Do the *work of evangelists*, my Lord Bishop? The man that does the *work of an evangelist*, must be an **EVANGELIST**!! And I will defy the whole bench of bishops to disprove this!! 'THEY' (the evangelists) 'are placed in the *first rank of permanent officers*.' (Letter, page 4.) 'The elders were *subject to the evangelist Timothy*.' (Ibid, page 4.) You, my Lord Bishop, are no more than **AN ELDER**. 'The **EVANGELISTS** of the Bible tried and judged **ELDERS**.' (Page 15.) 'The evangelist *Timothy* was empowered by the apostle to restore *repentant elders*.' (Page 15.) You, my Lord Bishop, though but an **ELDER**, have assumed and exercised the powers and prerogatives of the **EVANGELISTS**. 'The **WHOLE discipline** of churches where **EVANGELISTS** resided, as in the instances of *Timothy* at *Ephesus*, and *Titus* at *Crete*, was administered by **THEM**.' (Letter, page 20.) And then, after stripping his Lordship of his mitre, and kicking him out of the diocese, upon the principle that none but *evangelists should rule*, would not this reverend gentleman immediately have turned round, and modestly exclaimed, in the language he has put forth in the letter which we have so far exposed,—"I now call upon all impartial men to decide between us and our accusers, as to which has the sanction of **HOLY SCRIPTURE**!!" (Page 20.)

Having shewn how *contrary* the doctrine of Mr. Isaac "the evangelist" is, to the *instructions given* to the evangelists *Timothy* and *Titus*, and to the *conduct of the apostle Paul himself*, we shall next proceed briefly to inquire into the nature of the office of the *presbyter*, or *elder*, of the New Testament; and then endeavour to ascertain what correspondence there is between this office and that of a leader in the Wesleyan Methodist connexion.

(To be continued in our next.)

#### TO THE EDITORS OF THE CIRCULAR.

Gentlemen,

A report is now in circulation which seems to have obtained some credence; but such credence may be easily accounted for, when we consider the source whence the report has sprung. No doubt you are acquainted with this tale; and I can easily suppose why you have not noticed or given a contradiction to it. In my opinion, absurdity is strongly impressed upon it; and a few moments' consideration would satisfy the most prejudiced mind of its fallacy. It has been stated, that 'The Circular' is edited by men who, so far

from being influenced by pure and disinterested motives, are prompted by a desire of *gain*, and are actually filling their pockets by thus working on the minds of the ignorant and dissatisfied of the Methodist connexion! Such a report appears most absurd, not to say wicked. How can any one really believe that a work like 'The Circular,' got up as it is, can possibly be a source of profit to any one? I can easily conceive, that instead of there being a balance in favour of the Editors, there must in the nature of things be a considerable deficiency.

To 'The Circular,' the party in Conference are violently opposed, and do all in their power to limit its sale, which was to be expected; add to this, the expense of advertisements and placards, and the forwarding of the parcels to the distant places named in the publication—the over numbers of copies printed—the credit to be given—the losses attendant on publication—not forgetting the discount allowed to booksellers; all this is to be met by the profit on a *threepenny monthly periodical*. So convinced am I, that for *some time to come* there must be loss to the spirited conductors, and feeling it my duty, *if not the duty of every genuine Methodist*, to support such an important, respectable, and independent work, I send a small subscription of a sovereign, and shall feel pleasure in being considered an annual subscriber to that amount. But should I be mistaken in my ideas, and the profits of the sale are sufficient to meet the expenditure, I will thank you to send the amount in Circulars for gratuitous distribution;\* and this leads me to offer a suggestion for your consideration: Would it not be well to organize local committees in every principal town, to superintend and promote its circulation? Already it has done much good;—the connexion is beginning to take an interest in all the concerns of Methodism, and every day furnishes new proof that the people are becoming more alive to the preservation of their privileges, and determined to oppose the encroachments of Conference. It is of great importance that such a work as yours should be properly and spirit-edly supported;—it is the peoples' safeguard, and the only channel of conveying their sentiments to those who have robbed them of their rights, and who, if they continue in their present course, will sooner or later find that their measures will serve to hurl them from their present elevation, and make room for those who will rule in love. I see no means so sure ultimately to compel Conference to respect the voice of our local meetings, and cause the preachers to do justice by rescinding the disgraceful interpretation of the laws of 1795 and 1797, as the press. This must be accomplished; this is the point on which our operations must bear; nor must we cease until the Conference recognize the common sense interpretation of those concessions. It must be confessed, that the Methodist body has long been in a lamentable state of apathy as to its government. Much patience and exertion, as well as caution, is necessary on the part of those who are so laudably endeavouring to rouse its sleeping energies. *But success will come*. In the mean time let every means be taken for the diffusion of knowledge by 'The Circular'; let subscriptions be encouraged, not only to preserve the conductors from loss, but to give it a gratuitous circulation among those who have not yet read it. You have a claim upon us; and it is only to let the liberal and enlightened of our society know that additional subscriptions will prove of service, to cause them to open their purses, which of late they have partially closed against the demands of an imprudent and extravagant party, who have long been taking advantage of the confidence reposed in them.† I still would urge a hint I formerly gave—that whilst we are resolved to support our preachers respectfully, let us decidedly refuse supplies to those funds which have been so efficiently used to deprive us of our rights. This will prove a powerful means of curing the Conference junto of its blindness.—At another time I may give you a few proofs of the improvement in the feeling of our Birmingham society.

I am, Gentlemen, yours very truly,  
Birmingham, 14th Oct. 1830.

ALPHA.

\* Our esteemed correspondent is quite correct in supposing the conductors of this work to be out of pocket; indeed they have from the first anticipated such a result as necessarily attendant on their labours; and although it was not their intention to allude to such matters in 'The Circular,' yet they cannot but feel sensible of the kindness of their correspondent, and the more especially as affording a *substantial token* of his approval of their work. Any donations from our friends, forwarded under cover, addressed to the publisher, Church-street, will be thankfully received and duly acknowledged. Our correspondent is anticipated in his recommendation of committees, such having been either already formed, or are being formed, in several of the principal towns where this work is sold.—EDITS.

† See Minutes of last Conference on the state of the finances.

## TO THE EDITORS OF THE CIRCULAR.

Gentlemen,

Ever since the commencement of your periodical, many persons here, as well as myself, have felt much interested in its success. Its *object* is highly approved, and its contents have in general given great satisfaction.

That any circumstances should have occurred to render such a work necessary is matter of deep regret; nevertheless, such being the fact, I hailed its appearance as the only means left us to obtain a return to the principles of the constitution of 1795 and 1797, which I am convinced have been departed from in the proceedings you so justly reprobate. Being still decidedly of opinion, that the press alone, by operating on the public mind, can effect a change in the intentions of the high Conference party; and believing the method you have adopted the best that can be devised to produce this desirable result, I feel induced to give you my humble but hearty support.

I know not what may be the extent of your circulation; I should suppose it is large. It has, however struck me, that if proper means were adopted, it might be very greatly increased. I am persuaded the 'Circular' requires only to be known to ensure its being read; let it be read, and it cannot fail to enlighten and convince. But you must use the usual means to make it *extensively* known, and, consequently, extensively influential and beneficial. I fear you are deficient here. I have never seen it advertised. How is this? Does the expense prevent it? If so, I am sure you need only appeal to your numerous friends, and this obstacle will speedily be removed. Let some efficient plan be adopted, either by advertising in the public newspapers, or by placards, for the next six months, and I will guarantee the expense in Rochdale. In other towns, I doubt not, will be found persons like-minded; and thus, with no additional cost to the conductors, the influence of the 'Circular' will be more widely spread, and the end which you have in view more speedily accomplished.\*

You have probably heard that the leading friends of Methodism here have, from the first, been much dissatisfied with the Leeds business, and the subsequent proceedings. A respectful memorial or address, stating at length the grounds of their dissatisfaction, and praying earnestly for an explanation, or removal of the objectionable matters therein adverted to, was presented from this circuit to the Conference of 1829. To this they returned a written reply, in which, instead of noticing the entreaties, arguments and remonstrances of the memorial, *they reprove the brethren for having introduced such matters into the quarterly meeting, as being foreign to its proper business.* The friends, of course, being more than ever dissatisfied, another application was made to the last Conference, to which only a verbal and unmeaning answer was given. With such conduct the minds of our friends here are deeply pained. They feel that their applications to Conference

have been treated in a manner the *reverse* of what they were led to expect from the language of Conference in their Minutes of 1828, wherein they declare that "such applications are entitled to a kind, respectful and patient consideration." In reference to this affair I could add more, but I forbear.

You will be happy to hear, that notwithstanding all this, not one member has left the society on this account; nor has any one, so far as I know, the most distant intention of such a step. No, the Lord being their helper, they will not desert the church in which He has been pleased to bless them with light, life and salvation; but, through good and through evil report, they will persevere in their exertions to re-establish the constitution of 1795 and 1797.

ROCHDALE, 16th October, 1830.

A.Z.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"A WESLEYAN METHODIST," of Darlington, is received; his article shall have attention.

"IOTA" is received. We are truly sorry to be obliged again to postpone the insertion of our esteemed correspondent's communications, one or more of which we hope to be able to insert in our next.

"MINIMUS" has our thanks. We will request a friend to wait upon him.

"L," of London, containing tabular statements of important matters in Methodism, extracted from the Minutes of Conference, will probably appear in our next.

We are obliged to postpone the insertion of the article sent us by our respected correspondent, on the subject of the Sacrament.

"H" of Todmorden, is received; we shall be glad to have further communications from him, addressed to the Editors.

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			Painter, Hughes
			Yarmouth
			Alexander
			Deighton

\* The suggestions of our respected Correspondent shall have attention.

# The Circular

TO  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS,  
FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XI.

30TH NOVEMBER, 1830.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

IN our number for September (page 65) we gave an exposition of the Minutes of Conference respecting the numbers in society, shewing the increase in Great Britain to be 853, instead of 1749, as there stated.

A correspondent has since called our attention to the fact that there are 29 circuits in which the numbers are stated as being precisely the same as last year. This certainly looks somewhat suspicious, especially as he has the authority of the superintendent of one of the circuits alluded to, for declaring that the actual number in his circuit is not so great as stated in the Minutes.

This matter we shall pass over, and proceed to examine, as promised, how far the increase of 1749, even supposing it to be correct, (which, however, is acknowledged to be wrong in the Methodist Magazine for October, page 700) affords ground for the declaration of the Conference, that the societies are in a "prosperous" state.

Let not our readers, however, for a moment suppose, that we consider the proportions of increase in the Christian Church as capable of numerical demonstration. We know that the utmost exertions of man must utterly fail, unless accompanied by the influences of that Spirit alone which quickeneth the souls of men. At the same time we are perfectly justified in looking for that fruit of our labours which is promised to his faithful servants. If there appeared to be a withdrawal of the Divine Spirit from the religious world in general, or from Methodism in particular, as viewed in its various existing forms, then the case would be somewhat different. This, however, is not the fact, as religion is generally on the increase, and amongst the almost innumerable divisions and subdivisions of Methodism, we believe that *Conference Methodism* alone exhibits a disposition to retrograde. We shall here instance only the "Primitive Methodists," who have increased since 1820, from 7842 to 35,535, being upwards of 27,000 in ten years. Their increase last year in Great Britain was 1815. We would take the liberty of advising this zealous people to take care that they submit not to the domination of the rich, who otherwise will assuredly run them into debt and destroy their usefulness. Their preservation and prosperity greatly depend upon their retaining their original simplicity.

We proceed to notice the various parts of the vast machine of Conference Methodism, and the expense of its maintenance, in order to show that it is the merest trifling on the part of the Conference to talk of the "prosperity"

of a connexion possessing, humanly speaking, such means of extension, and exhibiting for some years past so small an augmentation.

The following may be considered the principal sources of increase.

1. The children of Methodist families growing up and introduced into the societies by their parents.

There are, according to the Minutes, 248,382 members in society in Great Britain, which, computed at six to each family, will give upwards of 40,000 families; and if only *one* member were brought in out of every 20 families, it would produce an annual increase of upwards of 2000.

2. The children in the Sunday Schools probably amount to not less than 200,000, instructed by about 20,000 teachers.

These institutions have usually yielded a large annual increase. How great we will not pretend to say; but most likely larger than arises from any other source.

3. The Ministry—travelling and local.

There are in Great Britain 747 travelling preachers and 101 supernumeraries; besides which, the local preachers may be computed at not less than 6000.

4. The number of class leaders we estimate at 16,000, and of prayer leaders about the same amount.

The exertions of both these classes of officers are very considerable. The former, especially, may be considered as the most effective body of men for preventing declension in the societies.

5. The attractions and influence of our charities, several of which employ visitors, who go to the houses of the poor instructing and inviting them.

The first source alone might be expected to supply for deaths and emigration. Put all the remaining sources together, there is not the increase that might be anticipated from any one of them.

The expenditure in methodism in support of the itinerant system in Great Britain, may be computed as follows:—

747 preachers, at an average of £180 per annum, including board, quarterage, rent, taxes, journeys to Conference and district meetings, &c. &c. (In London and several other places the expence is about £300) .....	£134,400
The Contingent Fund, including the July and yearly collections, and a subscription from the Book-room of £1400, part of the profit arising from that concern .....	9,700
The Kingswood and Woodhouse-Grove Schools, not including the preachers' contributions .....	6,000
The Auxiliary Preachers' Fund, about .....	3,000

Total estimated amount expended annually on the itinerancy £153,100

We have now presented our readers with a summary of, we believe, the most effective Christian army the world ever saw, and one which properly guided and encouraged would doubtless, under the blessing of Almighty God, produce greater effects in the spread of the gospel and conversion of sinners, than have ever yet appeared in connexion with any body of Christians on the face of the earth; where then shall we look for the causes which prevent the Divine Spirit from working amongst us, as in the days of old, and why are the exertions of this numerous army paralyzed? That passage of scripture, "a house divided against itself cannot stand," might afford a sufficient answer. The mal-administration of certain preachers who sit in high places, and whose chief endeavours appear but too evidently to be directed against the rights and privileges of the local officers in the connexion have caused a "withering blast" on the best energies of Methodism. There are however other causes which the God of this world has artfully introduced amongst us from time to time, such as elegant chapels, organs, &c. &c. These and other things have produced that heaviest curse whether of individuals or of societies,—DEBT,—and an expenditure beyond the means of the people; the very frequent calls which are therefore made in so many shapes on their slender earnings, have caused numbers to retire. By these things also those who remain are deterred from inviting others to join them, lest they should be chargeable with mercenary motives; and if the purity of the motive be once suspected, all hope of usefulness is at an end.

If out of the increase of members before mentioned, we were to award to each class of labourers such a portion as we might reasonably consider them entitled to, we fear that a very small number would fall to the share of the travelling preachers, but even supposing the whole increase to arise by their means, we think the statement of expenditure we have given, sufficient to shew that however dear some persons may think we pay for the conversion of the heathen abroad, the convert at home is a no less costly article.

These remarks are made with the certainty that we shall be visited with still greater obloquy than we have hitherto experienced. This we cannot help, and we very much fear, that there are many more things remaining to be handled in this publication, of a nature fully as unpleasant as any which have hitherto appeared.

If the Conference had only listened to the memorials and remonstrances addressed to them, and have shewn a disposition to redress the grievances of the people, by retracing their steps and pledging themselves in future to abide strictly in all their measures by the treaty of 1797, according to its obvious and common sense interpretation, then in all probability would peace and harmony have been restored to the societies; brethren would have dwelled together in unity; the smile of heaven would have been upon their laborious and united exertions in God's cause, and instead of having to mourn over comparatively unproductive labours, we should have had to rejoice in the conversion of thousands to himself. May God in his mercy speedily remove all obstructions to the progress of His cause, and may the respective parts of the vast machine of Methodism be again found to "work well" in generating those extensive and happy effects, it is so well calculated to produce under His rich and effectual blessing.

STRICTURES ON THE REV. DANIEL ISAAC'S PAMPHLET,  
ENTITLED

"*The Rules of the Protestant Methodists brought to the test of Holy Scripture, in a letter addressed to the members of that community.*"

(Continued from page 79 of our last Circular.)

Having, as we think, fairly swept away Mr. Isaac's Theory of EVANGELISM, we shall now,

III. Enquire, as we proposed, into the nature of the office of the Presbyter, or Elder, of the New Testament.

We presume that the testimony of Mr. Beecham and Mr. Isaac on this head, as far as they are found to consist with the truth, will have some weight with the adherents of the Conference, whose renowned champions these gentlemen have become. There are, however, some erroneous statements and glosses introduced by Mr. Beecham into passages where he is in part correct, which it will be necessary to notice at first setting out.

As it respects the *nature of the office of the PRESBYTER, OR ELDER, of the New Testament*, Mr. Beecham, in referring to the fifth chapter of the first epistle of St. Peter, says, "In the second verse he gives those PRESBYTERS OR ELDERS the following charge: 'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.' Here we have the Church spoken of as 'a flock'; and the *ministers of Christ*" (the presbyters or elders) "are directed to feed it. The word 'feed' is in the original *μαστίσσω*, the meaning of which we have previously investigated; and the point to be now ascertained is, whether the apostle here uses it in the sense of feeding, only. Most certainly he does not. As he speaks of the Church as a flock; as the 'work of a pastor', (a shepherd or herdsman) "is both to feed and govern the flock; and as the verb *μαστίσσω*, includes the two senses of feeding and governing; we are bound to admit that the apostle here imposes on *christian ministers*" (presbyters or elders) "the whole work of a pastor," (a shepherd or herdsman,) "and directs them to both 'feed and rule the flock' over which they are appointed to watch." (p. 77.)

This criticism is partly correct. But as Mr. Beecham can discover no presbyters or elders in the Methodist society, except the travelling preachers, neither can he perceive that the foregoing text referred to any but those who were engaged in the work of the ministry. In Methodism, however, there are those who are called to "feed the flock" besides the itinerant preachers, and also to take the "oversight thereof." If then it can be proved that there are presbyters or elders in Methodism, besides the travelling preachers, and who are called to "feed the flock," "taking the oversight thereof," it cannot be denied that the text is applicable to them.

Mr. Beecham is very fond of displaying his critical acumen, and of introducing extracts from his Greek Lexicon; but we have discovered nothing in what he has written beyond the ordinary comprehension of a novitiate. In the preceding quotation he says, "here we have the Church spoken of as a flock, and the *ministers of Christ* are directed to feed it." He thus *limits* the work of *feeding* to the *preachers* of the gospel. But it must be remembered that the feeding here spoken of is that of the "flock" only; and as the passage has no reference to *public* ministration, as we shall presently shew, the feeding cannot be that alone of preaching to a mixed congregation. Mr. Isaac has, in his "Ecclesiastical Claims," referred to this and two similar texts, as follows: "The question is, do teaching and feeding, in the above texts, imply public preaching? two reasons may be given to show they do not. 1st, The term feed, used in two of the passages, signifies to nourish with wholesome doctrine, and this teaching is limited to the *flock* or *church*. Titus's Bishop" (or presbyter) "is required to hold fast the faithful word, that he may be able by sound doctrine, to exhort and convince the unruly Jewish members of the Church, who were for imposing circumcision, and the ceremonies of the law, upon the Gentile believers. Here again the teaching is *limited* to the *Church*. 2nd, WOMEN held the *PRESBYTER* office in the *Church* as well as men; and a necessary qualification of these lady-presbyters, or lady-bishops (whichever you please to call them,) was to be teachers of good things. (Titus ii. 3.) But no one can suppose these women-teachers to have been public preachers, when he considers that the apostle would not allow a woman to pray or even appear *in the Church*, without a veil; and that from the delicacy of Eastern manners, a female must have lost her character for modesty who should have ventured to throw aside her veil, and harangue a mixed assembly of both sexes." (Eccles. Claims p. p. 115, 116.) This second reason acquires peculiar force with reference to the text in question, in proof that it cannot be understood as relating to *public ministers* only, as Mr. Beecham contends; for the epistle is a *general* epistle, and not addressed to one particular church, therefore the presbyters addressed must embrace the *female* presbyters. And they not being included among the PUB-

LIC teachers, the instructions given cannot be limited to presbyters of that class, or the public ministers of the gospel.

Mr. Beecham has, however, a very profound criticism, by which it appears to him that the word "elders", employed by the apostle, must mean Christian ministers only. We are afraid we shall weary our readers by its introduction; but as it is connected with his criticism already given, we may be charged not only with unfairness, but with a fear of introducing it, if it be withheld. "In the first verse, the apostle says, 'the elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.' That he is here addressing Christian ministers," says Mr. Beecham, "is evident from the word which he uses. The Greek word, (Greek as a matter of course) rendered, in our translation of the New Testament, 'elder' is *πρεσβύτερος*; the meaning of which is made evident by the fact, that it was early adopted, in different forms, into other languages, as the appellation designating the ministerial character. Our own word, priest, critics tell us, is a contradiction of presbyter, *πρεσβύτερος*. That they are MINISTERS whom the apostle addresses, appears again from this circumstance, —he calls himself *συμπρεσβύτερος*, a fellow-presbyter, or elder. Nor is this the only instance where an aged apostle gives himself this appellation" (of minister;) "John calls himself an 'elder' at the commencement of his last two epistles." (Page 77.)

We expected when the Greek word was announced, and especially on seeing it introduced in its proper characters, that we should have had something better than the foregoing miserable criticism. It is a novel mode of ascertaining the precise import of a word, as employed by a particular writer, to come down to future ages, and make some similar though greatly diversified object, to which the word may still be applied, that which is to convey to us the exact original import of the word. We presume that it is far more correct to compare the description of the object, to which the term is originally applied, as given by the writer, with the description given by his contemporaries; and then, from their collective testimony, to fix the true character of the object at the period when the writer applies the term. Had Mr. Beecham pursued this course it would have been correct. But instead of this, he says—"that the apostle is here addressing Christian ministers" (only) "is evident from the word which he uses." It is very "evident" that Mr. Beecham makes a bold assertion, but not so "evident," we think, that the term, when employed by St. Peter, designated Christian ministers only. However, we shall give what Mr. Beecham would, probably, call his proof. "The Greek word," he says, "rendered in our translation of the New Testament, 'elder', is *πρεσβύτερος*; the meaning of which word is made evident by the fact, that it was early adopted, in different forms, into other languages, as the appellation designating the MINISTERIAL character." We should be glad to know what light this criticism casts on the meaning of the word. Mr. Beecham says the meaning is made "evident"!! We really cannot perceive it; but it is nevertheless possible, that, with the aid of Mr. Beecham's ministerial telescope, we might see further. All that we can perceive is, that Mr. Beecham says the word "was early adopted, in different forms, into other languages" (than the Greek) "to designate the ministerial character." Admitting this "fact;" it establishes not the original meaning of the word, neither does it determine the sense of the apostle. But what are we to understand by the "ministerial character," at the several times when this term was adopted into "other languages." Are we to search out this character, at the different periods when the term was so adopted in "different forms," and thence deduce what was the office and character of a presbyter of the New Testament, and this too in order to ascertain the correct meaning of the word?" Or, may we not as well ascertain what the "ministerial character" is now, in order to determine the nature of the office of a presbyter of the New Testament, and thus arrive by a more speedy process at the import of the word. In either case we shall be equally at a loss; for if we go to those who "early adopted" the word, to designate the "ministerial character," we shall find no small degree of difference between that character and the presbyter of the New Testament. The church of Rome was among the first who adopted this term into one of the "different forms" referred to, but we dare not, whatever Mr. Beecham may find it convenient to do, make the "ministerial character" of that church, even when the term was "early adopted" by it, answer to the character of a presbyter of the New Testament, for we know that the assumption of authority by those who sustained the "ministerial character," in an "early" age of that church, was contrary to the spirit and example of the presbyters of the apostolic age, and led to that papal domination which is the antichrist that should come into the world. To whom then shall we go, in order to determine the "ministerial character," which is to guide us in the interpretation of the term "*πρεσβύτερος*?" Shall we go to the

Lutheran, or to the Methodist, or to the Established Church? If, for instance, we go to the two latter, what order, among those who sustain the "ministerial character, shall we fix upon? Shall we go to the Archbishop of Canterbury, or to the President of the Methodist Conference? Both, we presume, sustain the "ministerial character;" and which of these is it, from whose office we are to learn the nature of the office of a *presbyter of the New Testament*, in order to direct us in the interpretation of the word "*πρεσβύτερος*," and by which too, the meaning is to be made "evident."

We are really sorry to be obliged to expose the folly of Mr. Beecham's position, and to witness his childish attempts at criticism. But as every thing written by Mr. Beecham and others, in support of the absolute power of the Conference, and of the itinerant preachers, has been puffed off in the Methodist Magazine, we deem it our duty to expose the sophistry which is thus designed to delude the simple, however contemptible it may be held in our estimation. We shall still be as brief as possible, in commenting further on the passage already introduced, and it is the only one from Mr. Beecham which we shall at present notice; for were we to proceed to expose all his absurdities, we should of necessity have to print the greater part of his book; and we must bear in mind that our strictures are directed to another object. But both Mr. Beecham, and Mr. Isaac in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, contend for the proper authority of the elders of the Bible. So far, then, we shall avail ourselves of their evidence. And as we have shown, in the last number of the CIRCULAR, that Mr. Isaac has no right, admitting him to be an EVANGELIST, to rob the ELDERS of the Bible of their authority, so shall we in like manner show, that the passages of Scripture, upon which we are now introducing Mr. Beecham's criticisms, though they confer upon the PRESBYTERS the authority to FEED and RULE the CHURCH, are not to be restricted to the "ministerial character."

Mr. Beecham says, "our own word priest, critics tell us is a contraction of presbyter, *πρεσβύτερος*." What then? Are we to find out who is a "priest," as well as who sustains the "ministerial character," in order to ascertain what was the office of a *presbyter of the New Testament*? We suppose Mr. Beecham means to say that as the word priest is a contraction of presbyter, every priest is a presbyter. So he may be, of some kind; but not such a presbyter as St. Peter addressed in his first epistle. There are priests in the Church of Rome, and priests in the Church of England. In the latter, they are ordained in the first place as *deacons*, and after a certain period, they are ordained as *priests*. But the meaning of the term *priest*, in both these cases, is not what St. Peter meant by the word "*πρεσβύτερος*" in the text. So the word "*priest*" is of little service in enabling us to fix the meaning of the word "*πρεσβύτερος*," and in leading us to understand the true character of the church officer which that term designated. However, it is of no consequence to Mr. Beecham what mode he adopts, whether logical, or philological, or the contrary, so that he can but transform all the presbyters and elders of the New Testament into itinerant preachers, or public ministers of the gospel. To establish this point he is very anxious; and hence, in the first place, he would fain persuade us that as the term presbyter has been adopted to designate the "ministerial character," it must mean ministers of the gospel only; and secondly, as the term priest is applied to ministers of the gospel, and is a contraction of presbyter, so must the latter mean ministers of the gospel only! We have already pointed out the proper and legitimate mode of ascertaining the meaning of original terms; and we must now further inform Mr. Beecham that scholars are not in the habit of seeking for the meaning of primitive words in their derivatives, but on the contrary, the meaning of derivative words is deduced from their roots. And, therefore, instead of ascertaining what a priest is, in order to determine the meaning of the word presbyter, Mr. Beecham should have gone to the latter, as the root, and thereby have determined what the former character should be, in order that it might correspond with what the original imports. Had this legitimate mode been adopted, instead of finding that the word presbyter in the text meant a minister of the gospel only, Mr. Beecham would have found that the term meant an aged person also. "From the Greek word *πρεσβύτερος*," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "comes the Latin *presbyterus*; the English *presbyter*, the French *prestre*, and our own term *priest*; and all when traced up to their original, signify merely an elderly or aged person; though it soon became the name of an office, rather than that of a state of years." (Acts, xx. 17.) The Rev. Joseph Fletcher, in his "Lectures on the Roman Catholic Religion," remarks, that "the authority of the apostles was peculiar and exclusive; but the nature of their office required a frequent change of residence, and therefore local instructors were appointed in the various stations where they introduced the

gospel. These instructors consisted of those who were most eminently qualified by their gifts and graces, to edify the *churches* to which they belonged."—"They are described by a great variety of names in the New Testament. They are called *presbyters* or *elders*, probably because at first, those persons would be selected for the office, whose AGE and EXPERIENCE best qualified them for discharging its duties." While on the one hand then there is no ground whatever for the forced interpretation of Mr. Beecham, that the term *presbyters* must mean ministers of the gospel only, there is good reason to infer that the *presbyters* or *elders* addressed by St. Peter, had been chosen chiefly, if not wholly, from among the aged and experienced, and that as AGED persons, as well as *ELDERS* by OFFICE, they were addressed by the apostle, but not as *public ministers* of the gospel only, for though ALL of them were called to "feed the FLOCK," they were not ALL called to be *public ministers*. Unless Mr. Beecham can prove that every presbyter of the primitive church was a *public minister* of the gospel, he cannot limit the text to them, for the text being addressed to the presbyters generally must include them ALL in their particular office, as *presbyters*, in which they were ALL called to "FEED the FLOCK of God which was among them, taking the oversight thereof;" but the *presbyters* were not all called to *preach in public*. Mr. Isaac says in two places in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, that the apostle is in the text in question addressing the AGED. In one place, he remarks, "Two reasons may be given why the word *presbyters*, in this passage, signifies merely OLD MEN, and not ecclesiastical officers. First, in the fifth verse it is opposed to youth;—'Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder.' Secondly, the apostle calls himself a *presbyter*, and makes this the ground of his exhortation. If we take the word here in an *official* sense, we must suppose him to urge his station in the church as the reason why his advice should be followed; but the higher the station the greater the authority; it would therefore have been more suitable to have styled himself an apostle. On the other hand, if we take the word *presbyter* here as relating to *age*, and not to *office*, we at once perceive the propriety, and feel the force of the apostle's address, and all difficulties vanish:—'The aged I exhort, who myself also am aged; likewise ye younger, submit yourselves to the aged.' (p. p. 111, 112.)

Mr. Beecham adds, "That they are *MINISTERS* whom the apostle addresses, appears again from this circumstance,—he calls himself *συμπρεσβύτερος*, a fellow-presbyter or elder." It is surprising that this writer can perceive nothing in the word "presbyters" but what is now understood by the word "ministers." He again asserts, "Nor is this the only instance where an apostle gives himself this appellation: John calls himself an 'elder'" (minister) "at the commencement of his last two epistles."

Certainly John does not in these passages call himself a "MINISTER," as Mr. Beecham would give us to understand; nor are these texts interpreted by some of our best commentators, as referring to the office of "elder." Mr. Isaac has, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, given Dr. Macknight's paraphrase on these texts. "This appellation," says the Doctor, "signifies the AGED apostle." And Mr. Isaac remarks that "in his preface to the second epistle, he" (the Doctor) "observes, 'Heuman gives it as his opinion, that in the title *elder*, there is a reference to John's great age when he wrote these epistles, and that he was as well known by the title of elder, as by his proper name; so that *elder* was the same as if he had said, the AGED apostle.'" (Eccles. Claims, p. 114.) With the foregoing paraphrase of Dr. Macknight, agrees the following comment of Dr. Adam Clarke:—"John, the apostle, who was now a very old man, generally supposed to be about ninety, and, therefore, he uses the term ὁ πρεσβύτερος, presbyter, or elder, not as the name of an office, but as designating his advanced AGE." How this instance of the apostle John's giving himself the appellation of "elder," serves to support Mr. Beecham's theory we have now seen; and we think our readers will be fully satisfied that Mr. Beecham has failed in his attempt to twist the passages in question, to serve his particular views and purposes, and those of his party. But notwithstanding this, there are, probably, many who, because they will not think for themselves, will receive his glosses, and others equally erroneous, as the true gospel, if the Editor of the *Methodist Magazine* should recommend them to be "circulated through the *Methodist connexion*," and the preachers recommend them to be read. It has been justly remarked by an eloquent living writer, that "there is a description of men who are systematically accustomed to yield up their understandings to others." It is much to be regretted that the Editor of the *Magazine* should have the least ground to calculate upon meeting with some of "this servum pecus, this tame and passive herd," in the *Wesleyan Methodist connexion*. We have, however, shown, that the "elders," though not all, called to officiate as public "ministers," were all commanded to "feed the flock, taking the

oversight thereof," and over which, the "Holy Ghost" had "made them overseers." The *feeding and governing* of the "flock," for which Mr. Beecham so strenuously contends, in behalf of the *presbyters* mentioned in the foregoing texts, therefore, belong not only to the office of the *public ministry*, but also to *presbyters* or *elders* NOT in that office.

Mr. Isaac, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, says, that "The office of a *presbyter*" (or elder) "is to *bishop* or *oversee* the *CHURCH*, which certainly does not require the person who fills it to go into the *world*, and preach *publicly* for the conversion of infidels. The apostle Paul prescribed only two duties to the presbyters of *Ephesus*,—to *feed* and *oversee* the *Church*. The duty of a *bishop*, he informs us, is to *take care of the Church of God*, and the qualifications for this office are, First, Ability to teach the *Church* the *laws of Christ*, by which it is to be governed. *Apt, or fit to teach.* Secondly, *A good example*,—which is *self-government*. *An overseer must be blameless, &c.* Thirdly, *Good family government*. *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for, if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God.*" (I. Tim. iii. 5.) "The qualifications required of a *presbyter* are the same. (Titus, i. 5-9, I. Pet. v. 12.) (Eccles. Claims, p. 115. Here Mr. Isaac tells us, that the particular office of the *presbyter*, or *elder*, was to "bishop or oversee the CHURCH" only, "to feed and oversee the CHURCH." But this did not prevent those of the *presbyters* who had talents for the *public ministry*, from engaging in that work, and thereby becoming co-workers with the *extraordinary officers* of the *Church*, the *apostles* and *evangelists*. Mr. Isaac has, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, shown that *some* of the *presbyters* *preached*, and that *others did not*, but that their exercising the office of the *ministry* did not necessarily make any alteration as it respected the office they held as *presbyters*; and hence he says, "some of the *presbyters*, we have seen, were *preachers*; and so are some of the *Methodist LEADERS*." Eccles. Claims, p. 145. Again; with reference to I. Tim. v. 17, "Let the *elders* that rule WELL be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." Mr. Isaac says, "instead of proving, as some have supposed, that labouring in the word and doctrine, was a part of the *presbyter* office, proves the contrary. For it is evident, that, though ALL the *PRESBYTERS RULED*, only *SOME of them PREACHED*; because the word *especially* distinguishes the *preachers* from the rest. But if the *presbyter* office included in it the *public ministry* of the word, the whole of them must have been *preachers*." (Eccles. Claims, p. 119.) Mr. Benson, in his commentary, takes the same view of the passage; he says, "especially they who labour, diligently and painfully, in the word and doctrine, that is, in preaching and teaching."

We have thus shown, even from *Mr. Isaac himself*, that the office of *presbyter* or *elder* was NOT confined to those engaged in the work of the *MINISTRY*; and that it was the peculiar duty of the *PRESBYTER*, to "FEED and OVERSEE the *CHURCH*"—to "BISHOP or OVERSEE the *CHURCH*," and that "ALL the *PRESBYTERS RULED*." We have brought forward Mr. Beecham's testimony, to show that this *RULING* included ALL the general acts of *discipline* required in the *CHURCH*, and that these were exercised by the *PRESBYTERS OR ELDERS*, who, as we have shown were NOT *ministers of the gospel only*, or *public preachers* of the word, as he asserts.

But notwithstanding what Mr. Isaac has contended for, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, as appertaining to the office of the *presbyter* or *elder* of the primitive church, as seen in the quotations we have given,—and that he has also shown, in the same work, that the *LEADERS in Methodism* are the church officers *answering to those presbyters or elders*,—he has now the effrontery to come forward, and, in his first letter to the *Protestant Methodists*, to *PROTEST*, not only against the *SCRIPTURAL rights and privileges* exercised by the *PRESBYTERS OR ELDERS* of the *BIBLE*, but also against the *rights and privileges* secured to the *LEADERS of the Methodist Society* by the concessions of 1797!! We give the following quotation from his letter, page 14:—"So OUR RULES STATE, that 'the LEADERS' MEETING shall have a right to declare any person on trial, improper to be received into the Society; and AFTER SUCH DECLARATION, the superintendant SHALL NOT ADMIT SUCH PERSON into the Society.' But since *ELDERS* are never once in the *Bible* represented as receiving new members, WE PROTEST AGAINST THIS PRACTICE OF OUR REFORMERS."!! We are aware that this is a protest against the *Protestant methodists*; but it is a protest also against the *ELDERS* of the *BIBLE*, and against the *LEADERS' MEETINGS* having any concern in the regular admission of members into the church. If it is the right of a leaders' meeting to declare any person on trial improper to be received into the society, and if the superintendent cannot admit such person after such declaration, then the leaders' meeting must

be understood as consenting, through its respective members, to the introduction of *every member* into society *not declared* to be *improper*. The superintendent does not act independently of the leader, as though we had no leaders in the Methodist society; nor can he receive any member into a class without the approbation of the leader, and, consequently, generally of the leaders' meeting. Our LEADERS, therefore, receive *new members*, conjointly with the superintendent; and HE receives *new members* not independent of, but, conjointly with the leaders. But Mr. Isaac protests against this spirit, and hitherto the general practice of the law he has quoted, and he would persuade us that an itinerant minister, as an EVANGELIST, has a right to act in such cases independent of *elders* or *leaders*, who have, nevertheless, both according to his own shewing, as much right to receive new members as an *evangelist*, for he says in the very next page in his letter, (p. 15) that "it has been proved at large in 'Ecclesiastical claims,' that our LEADERS answer to the *ELDERS* of the *BIBLE*." What then are we to think of Mr. Isaac, after witnessing this shameful conduct? Has he not told us that it was the official duty of the *ELDERS* to "bishop" the "church," to "oversee" the "church" to "rule" the "church"? And have not both he and Mr. Beecham maintained, as we have seen, that this *bishoping*, *overseeing*, or *ruling*, includes *ALL discipline*? How, we ask, can Mr. Isaac deny that the *ELDERS* of the *BIBLE* had a right to expel immoral members from, and to receive new members into the church? Probably Mr. Isaac may turn around, and, forgetting what he has otherwise written, say "what I have written is this, that 'ELDERS are never once in the *bible* REPRESENTED as receiving new members!'" Oh! they are never once in the *bible* "REPRESENTED" as doing so!—*Ergo*, they had *no such right*! So then, according to Mr. Isaac, the *travelling preachers*, as *PRESBYTERS* or *ELDERS*, have *no right* to *admit* and *expel* members. And whatever act may be lawfully exercised in the church, by virtue of the *office* to which it appertains, still we may *PROTEST* that it *does not belong to the office*, if it is not "*REPRESENTED*" in the *Bible* as having been actually performed. It is really alarming to see how this gentleman's head has been affected since he has put on his *EVANGELISTICAL ROBES*. When he wrote his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, he could not only place the *discipline* of the *church* in the hands of the *presbyters* and *elders*, but in the *WHOLE SOCIETY*. "The practice of the apostles," he tells us, "was, when they had planted a church, to appoint *governors*, or leave the *BRETHREN* to manage their own affairs, according to circumstances.

It does not appear that *any officers* were appointed in the *church* of *CORINTH*; because the *DISCIPLINE* of it was executed by the *WHOLE SOCIETY*. (Eccles. Claims, p. 83.) Notwithstanding what he here says of the *CORINTHIAN CHURCH*, he, in his first letter, page 22, denies the exercise of discipline by the *WHOLE SOCIETY*, in this *very church*. In his remarks on Mr. Leach, he says, "Mr. L, in commenting on the expulsion of the incestuous *CORINTHIAN*, reduces the whole authority of the apostle Paul to a *single vote*; and he allows the same to *each member of the church*!" Does not Mr. Isaac allow it too? "The phrases 'the whole church,' and 'the whole members of a church,' must include females as well as males, and children as well as adults; and I have shown in 'Baptism Discussed,' that there were numerous young children in the churches planted by the apostles. An inspired apostle, then, had actually, according to Mr. L, just as much authority in the church as a girl or a boy of half a dozen or half a score years of age! Mr. L is a radical reformer with a vengeance! What megrim will come next!" Letter, p. 22. We are not defending Mr. Leach. This is not our business. But the "*megrin*" that has come "*next*," it appears to us, is the objection which Mr. Isaac has here brought forward; which is not only one against Mr. Leach, but against *himself*; and we really think it is a "*megrin*" of the *very first class*. The adults, too, had "actually just as much authority in the church, as a girl or boy of half a dozen or half a score years of age!" according to Mr. Isaac's showing, where children were in the churches; and he must therefore lay the blame on the apostles, for thus bringing the authority of the *adults* into contempt, in those cases where the discipline was exercised by the *WHOLE SOCIETY*, as was the case, according to Mr. Isaac, in the *church* of *CORINTH*. But *CORINTH* was not a solitary instance of the discipline having been exercised by the *WHOLE SOCIETY*; for he tells us in another part, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, "We have seen that, in constituting the churches, the apostles were guided by circumstances;—they admitted of diversity, and never dreamed about uniformity: hence, in *some churches* they appointed *presbyters*, in *others* they advised the *aged to assume the office*," (of *presbyter*) "in *others* they left the *exercise of discipline* to *ALL THE MEMBERS in a GENERAL MEETING*; and the *office* of the *ministry* they left free to all. A few grains of common sense, and the spirit of Christianity, are better guides in these matters, than all the infallible priests the church has ever produced." (Eccles.

Claims, p. 142.) So then, while Mr. Isaac, in his *Letter to the Protestant Methodists*, DENIES to the *ELDERS* of the *Bible* *their rights*, he CONTENDS, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, that the discipline of "some churches" was WHOLLY EXERCISED BY THEM, and, moreover, that in "others," the apostles "left the exercise of discipline to *ALL THE MEMBERS in a GENERAL MEETING*; for the apostles never dreamed about *uniformity*;" and "a few grains of *COMMON SENSE*, and the *SPRIT OF CHRISTIANITY*, are better guides in *these matters*, than *ALL the infallible PRIESTS the church has ever produced*!" But Mr. Isaac directs his *PROTEST*, not only against the rights of the *ELDERS* of the *Bible*, but AGAINST those of the *LEADERS* in *METHODISM*, and the *Methodist Magazine* applauds him, in defiance of the *Scriptural denunciation* of those "*covenant breakers*," to whom these gentlemen appear ready to give their zealous support. The *Methodist* public will now see WHO is DISSATISFIED with the *CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM*, and WHO wishes to OVERTURN IT. They will now be able to form a proper estimate of *Mr. Isaac's principles*, and those of *his party*, and will perceive that THEY are the *MEN* who have a desire and aim to SUBVERT the *CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM*, as set forth in the *concessions and code of laws of 1797*, against which *Mr. Isaac, the evangelist, now so loudly PROTESTS*. Here we perceive the cloven foot which we shall again have a further opportunity of exposing; but we particularly request the attention of our readers to this fact, that, while the arguments of the *South London Circuit address*, and those of the reply to *Mr. Watson*, remain unanswered, *Mr. Isaac* and his party have slanderously charged the *Protestant Methodists*, and all who have opposed the unconstitutional proceedings of the *Conference and the preachers, respecting the organ question at Leeds*, with a desire to alter the *CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM*. A pamphlet has recently been published, reiterating this charge, without any satisfactory proof. This pamphlet is reported to have been written by *Mr. Galland*, and is entitled "*Sound Thoughts for Sound People*," &c. If there can be "sound thoughts," without sound sense, we may admit the correctness of the title. But we shall probably take some further notice of this pamphlet. The editor of the *Methodist Magazine* has placed it in the *September number*, in the "select list of books, recently published;" and HE has again reiterated the charge, and said, "No separation from the *Methodist society* would have taken place in *Leeds*, had there not been previously formed a settled hostility to the peculiarities of *Methodist discipline*." There might be a "settled hostility" to some "*peculiarities of Methodist discipline*," which were UNCONSTITUTIONAL. But our reply is, that the "*SETTLED HOSTILITY*" remains with those who "*PROTEST*" against the *CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM*: it remains with those who can puff off a pamphlet containing such a "*PROTEST*," without warding off the blow so directed against the *heart of THAT CONSTITUTION*. But it was a blow directed against the *power of the LEADERS, as the LAITY*, and therefore the editor of the *Magazine* could applaud the outrage! But while these blows are intended to bring down one part of the constitution, they are designed to elevate the other! and they proclaim to the *people* that there is a "*settled hostility*" to the *CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM*, "accompanied by a manifest departure from the spirit of Christianity," in the *MEN WHO ARE THUS PREPARED TO STRIKE*. Let the *Methodist PEOPLE*, then, know wherein their strength lies. Let them come forth with a lion-like prowess, in defence of the bulwarks of their constitution, and they shall be too mighty for the foe that would thus dare to batter its walls, or sap its foundations. Let them bear in mind that they will never be under the necessity of raising the siege; for their besiegers subsist by the pence they contribute to their support. Let both *LEADERS* and *PEOPLE* denounce the *MEN* who will thus *PROTEST* against the *CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM*; and resist, to the last, the *least encroachment* upon the *authority of the LOCAL MEETINGS*.

(To be continued in our next.)

#### ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, IN THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONNEXION.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

Gentlemen,—I am a plain man, unacquainted with the jargon of the schools, and accustomed to judge of men and things according to the dictates of common sense. I now write to request information from some of your correspondents relative to the administration of the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* in the *Wesleyan Methodist Connexion*.

Mr. Beecham has, in his flights, obtained very lofty views of the position and authority of a *travelling* preacher, whom he considers as invested with the powers of an apostle. He can do, and undo ! He can rule the Church as he pleases ; and he alone, of course, can administer all its ordinances. He is the only *pastor* ; and he is constituted such because that, in addition to his being "divinely called to the ministry," he is *separated from secular engagements*. Now, how comes it to pass, Mr. Editor, that a person thus divinely called to the ministry, and thus separated from worldly occupation, cannot still administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ?

This is the case with all the travelling preachers who have not travelled four years. They are, therefore, I presume, not our *recognized PASTORS*.

"There are three functions especially," says Mr. Beecham, "which the minister of the gospel—the Christian pastor, has to perform. He is, first, to teach ; secondly, to administer the ordinances ; thirdly, to enforce discipline." Having made his remarks on the subject of teaching, Mr. B adds, "To proceed to the second pastoral function which we have named ; the *regular preacher* performs this *exclusively*. He baptizes, and *administers* the *Lord's SUPPER* ; and *none but he does either*." You know, Mr. Editor, that the junior travelling preachers do not perform these functions, even after they have travelled three years. They are therefore, according to Mr. Beecham, not our "*regular*" preachers—they are not Christian *pastors*. I should be glad to know whether they are still "*deacons* ;" for this is what Mr. Beecham makes the local preachers, from whom the former have sprung. Certain it is they cannot be *pastors*, otherwise they could perform the important and essential pastoral function of administering the *Lord's Supper*. If they were *deacons* when in their station as local preachers, they may perhaps be so now, for they have now far more to do with the *pecuniary* affairs of the Church. This may be a good reason why *THEY* should not exercise the pastoral functions, although this reason cannot lie against the local preacher, for he does not "*serve tables*." His office is purely spiritual: his business is to gather in the *souls* of men ; the gathering in of their *money* he leaves to the "*DEACONS !*" *PASTORS ! EVANGELISTS !* or whatever else these *travelling* worthies may please to call themselves in their several grades. To the office of *DEACON* men are appointed in every Church as in the days of the apostles. But in the Church of England, the persons to whom the term is applied are not *deacons*. It is a misnomer. And Dr. Adam Clarke very correctly observes, in his commentary on *Acts vi. 4*, "At present the office for which the seven *DEACONS* were appointed, is, in the Church of England, filled by the *CHURCH WARDENS*." In the Wesleyan Methodist Church it is filled by the *STEWARDS*.

When Mr. Bunting was *Editor* of the *Methodist Magazine*, he replied to a correspondent relative to the administration of the *Sacrament* by local preachers, observing that the practice could not be admitted without "breaking down those regulations which arise," says he, "in our opinion, out of the very nature of the pastoral office." And he adds, as a reason why the practice should not be adopted, that the local preachers, "though eminently useful in their station as *evangelists* ! ! are not our *recognized PASTORS* ;" thus to a *PASTOR* the right to administer the *Sacrament* belonged, though it did not belong to ministers of the gospel, or preachers, in the station of an "*EVANGELIST* ! !" According to the economy of *Methodism*, the right does not belong to travelling preachers who have not travelled *four years*. They cannot, therefore, be as Mr. Bunting says, our "*recognized PASTORS*."

We have then travelling preachers who are not *pastors*, or *pastors*, not allowed to exercise the functions of the pastoral office. Thus *Wesleyan Methodism* presents on the one hand, the anomaly of travelling preachers, unconnected with any secular calling, incapable of exercising the functions of the pastoral office, and on the other hand, certain laymen, wholly given up to worldly engagements, exercising these functions. When I speak of certain laymen, I mean those who *have been* travelling preachers. For instance, the book steward, as he is called, Mr. Mason, now resident in London, is as deeply engaged in trade as any other publisher in *Paternoster-row* ; and yet this *secularized* individual performs the pastoral function of administering the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* ! This is the case also with another respected individual, who is in extensive practice in London as a *surveyor*. This was the case also with another who was recently engaged in the *tea trade* ; as also with others that might be named. Now I should be glad to know the mystery, Mr. Editor, why one layman engaged in worldly business, but called to preach the gospel and admitted by the Church, may not administer the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* as well as another layman ; and what is the quality and degree of purification a man undergoes to qualify him for performing this function during four years training by the *Conference* ? Also how this pastoral purification is preserved from taint when the individual is again *secularized* ?

It has been well remarked, in an able pamphlet, just published, entitled "*Strictures on Mr. Beecham's Essay on the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism*." "That those who 'serve the altar should live by the altar' is the language both of reason and revelation ; but it is wondrous strange if a claim of this sort cannot be forborne, without incurring the forfeiture of all *pastoral* pretensions. When honest John Bunyan was *accused* by some in his day of *receiving a salary as PASTOR* of the church at Bedford, he gloried in asserting his independence. 'Though I be poor,' said he, 'and of no repute in the world, as to outward things, yet this grace I have learned, by the example of the apostle, to preach the truth, and to work with my hands, both for my own living and for those that are with me.' And perhaps he was as good a *PASTOR* after all as Mr. Beecham, or any of his associates, though he sometimes mended pots and kettles."\*

I have been led to write to you, Mr. Editor, through a circumstance which occurred at *Wilderness Row Chapel*, in the *London North Circuit*, on Sunday evening, the 27th instant. According to the printed plan, the Rev. Richard Watson was to preach there, and to administer the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, that evening. But a change was made in the appointment, he having gone to *Southville Chapel*, in the *Second London South Circuit*, to preach an anniversary sermon for that place, and the Rev. Mr. Etheridge having come from that circuit to preach for him. It was expected by the society that the *Sacrament* would be administered by Mr. Etheridge, after the sermon, according to the printed plan ; and he being a travelling preacher, and the communion table being prepared, the society intended remaining for the purpose of receiving the sacred elements. But at the close of the public service, the preacher made an apology, informing the society and congregation that it was intended the *Sacrament* should be administered that evening according to the printed plan, but HE could not administer it, not having travelled as a *Methodist* preacher four years, and not being received into connexion by the *Conference*. Several members of the society looked very significantly at each other, on this annunciation, and then at the Rev. Samuel Drew, M.A., he being one of the congregation. Many persons

\* *Strictures*, p. 13.

afterwards inquired, "If Mr. Etheridge could not administer the Sacrament, why could not Mr. Drew, who has been preaching during thirty years in the connexion, whom we highly respect, and from whose hands we would have gladly received the memorials of the dying love of the Redeemer?" To these inquiries neither reason nor scripture presented any other answer than that he, being an accredited preacher of the truth among us (though denominated a "local preacher") must be every way as well qualified to administer the Sacrament as any member of the Conference, seeing we have no consecrated wafer, nor do we recognize the dogmas whereby the mystery of iniquity works among the priesthood of the Church of Rome. But, perhaps, Mr. Editor, some of your correspondents can throw further light on the subject.

I shall, however, conclude with the following remark of Dr. Adam Clarke on this question. These accord with the views of every member of the Methodist society with whom I have conversed on the subject. The Doctor, in his discourse on the Eucharist, says, "The inquiry is of great importance, 'Who are they who should administer this sacred ordinance?' I answer,—every minister of Jesus Christ; for, every man who is called to preach the gospel, is called to feed the flock of God. If a man who professes to preach the gospel, can prove that he has no authority to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper," (as was the case both with Mr. Etheridge and Mr. Drew, and for which reason the people were dismissed without the Sacrament) "I can prove to him that he has no authority to preach; for, how can he bear proper testimony to the atonement, who cannot legitimately use the sacred symbols which best represent it? But this is both an idle and foolish conceit; for he who is called to preach the gospel, is called to administer all the ordinances of the church of Christ."\*

I need add no more to this; but I shall just observe, that the great charge brought by the Rev. Daniel Isaac, against the Wesleyan Protestants in his first letter, is, that they have presumed to deprive their missionaries, or evangelists, as he calls them, of the right of performing certain duties, which he contends Scripturally belong to the office. I shall not now enter into an enquiry as to what they have done; but if they have done as he says, they have unfortunately followed the example of the Methodist Conference. Still, one evil deed will not justify another. If every man who is called to preach the gospel, has a Scriptural warrant to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, (and who will say he has not?) by what authority does the Methodist Conference deprive men of this right? Have they a right to set aside the authority of Scripture? Was it consistent with the word of God, and with Christian simplicity, that a church should be dismissed, without being permitted to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when that Sacrament was spread before them, and when men were present who were appointed by that same church to publish salvation, and to invite penitent sinners to the Supper of the Lord? Why could not these men open the gate, that the people might enter in and find pasture? Was it necessary to go to St. Peter for the keys? If so we have formed a fearful alliance! If it be not so, let the Conference explain the matter and also the other inconsistencies connected with this subject which I have pointed out.

I am, Mr. Editor, your most obedient servant,

London, 30th June, 1830.

COMMON SENSE.

\* Sermons, vol. iii, p. 217.—London, 1830.

#### ON RADICALISM.

Gentlemen,

The term "RADICAL" was once considered, in political circles, a term of the greatest possible reproach; but it is now rising above that, and gaining credit in quarters from which it would formerly have been scouted. In our enlightened day, it is unsparingly applied (especially by what is termed the ministerial party amongst the Methodists) to all who do not in every thing agree with them;

and to be thus denominated by this party is, in other words, to be disaffected, dissatisfied, and resolutely but unnecessarily opposed to the measures of the preachers, whether right or wrong.

Anxious to understand the application of the term in the present disputes in the Methodist societies, and to ascertain what a **METHODIST RADICAL** is, I propose to myself the following queries and replies.

Is it to be always dissatisfied with things as they may exist, and continually foreboding evil as if it were desirable? *Then I am not a radical.*

Is it to be a sower of discord, and a promoter of strife amongst the members of society, endeavouring to make others as dissatisfied and uneasy as myself? *Then I am not a radical.*

Is it to hail any disagreement between the preachers and the people with feelings of gratification, and to extend its circulation as widely as possible, with personal satisfaction? *Then I am not a radical.*

Is it to be continually talking against the preachers, with or without reason, and representing them all as ambitious and designing men, seeking their own rather than the will of Christ? *Then I am not a radical.*

Is it to be on the watch, and eagerly to embrace every opportunity to lessen the influence of the preachers over the people, by improper, unjust, and untrue representations? *Then I am not a radical.*

Is it to envy the preachers their situation, or to represent them, when righteously discharging their duty, as unworthy of their hire? *Then I am not a radical!* And if, in any of the above respects, there be any radicals in the society, I am persuaded they are very few.

But on the other hand, if to suppose it possible that a preacher, however popular he may be, may do wrong, and seek to promote improper ends by equally improper means,—if this be what we are to understand by the term, then I confess that *I am a radical!*

If it be to suppose Conference itself fallible, and of course may err in judgment, *then I am a radical!*

If to suppose that Conference may make laws, and afterwards violate them to answer some particular purpose, and to forward the views of some particular men, constitute what is called radicalism, *then I am a radical!*

If this offence be to suppose the preachers may seek the friendship and society of the rich and influential, to the neglect of the poor and the pious, my observation and experience compel me to confess myself *a radical!*

If it be to suppose it possible that a preacher may be disposed to extenuate the faults of the rich, while on some occasions they rather aggravate those of the poor,—*then I am a radical!*

If to suppose that some preachers may be forgetful of what they once were, and would fain make themselves great ones, overlooking the very persons who were the main cause of their present elevation, constitute this offence, then am I guilty thereof, *and am a radical!*

If it be to suppose it possible that preachers may be disposed to, (and actually have done) lay *right rule* aside to meet the views of the rich and influential for the promotion of certain purposes, *then I am a radical!*

If to believe, and assert, that Conference has grossly violated the treaty and charter of 1797, and unrighteously hooked in the "miscellaneous regulations" of that year as forming part of the compact for the government of the societies, and is still disposed to act upon this perverted

interpretation,—if to hold such sentiments designate a radical, then am I content to bear the epithet, and avow myself *a radical*!

If to believe that the travelling preachers should not exclusively govern, but that the leaders and local preachers, who are co-labourers in the word and doctrine in the Methodist societies, and whose services are gratuitous, ought to participate in the polity of the Church, particularize a radical, then do I acknowledge myself *a radical*!

If to think that the services of the local preachers, and leaders, and all others who hold office or discharge any duty in the societies are aidant in the prosperity of Methodism, and contribute to the increase of its members, merit this designation, then am I content to be considered *a radical*!

If to fear that the Conference is desirous of taking away from the local meetings the power ceded to them in 1795 and 1797, and to circumscribe the number of the members of the quarter-day meetings be radicalism,—then entertaining, as I do, this fear, *I am a radical*!

If he be a radical who thinks that all such attempts should be met by the vigilance of the officers and the people, and that such measures should be adopted as will produce a confirmation of long enjoyed *rights*, which, whether *inherent* or not, are just and equitable—I confess most unequivocally that I am *one*, and rejoice to think that very many others equally deserving of the epithet may be found in the society, and I should like to know what in this kind of radicalism is really criminal or unscriptural.

Liverpool, 18th October, 1830.

IOTA.

#### ON THE DIVISION OF CIRCUITS.

We are sorry that the insertion of the following letter should have been so long postponed,—the subject is important and will doubtless command the attention of our readers.

#### TO THE EDITORS OF THE CIRCULAR.

Gentlemen,—I congratulate the Methodist societies, that at length they are about to assert their rights, by claiming the liberty of the press;—this is the only means by which their official members can ever hope for a restoration of those privileges, of which they have been so unjustly deprived by the Conference; and it is to the want of this, that numerous evils have of late crept into their government.

The frequent division of circuits has been found to be an evil, and attended with consequences highly prejudicial to our religious prosperity as a body. Wherever circuits have been divided, the travelling preachers have always been found the most zealous advocates in promoting such measures, and have proved, through sophistry and artifice, only too successful in carrying their point.

Their principal arguments for such divisions have been, “Their being enabled to bestow greater pastoral care over the people, thereby stimulating them to greater exertions and diligence in religion; and their instrumentality in promoting an extension of the work of God, by breaking up fresh ground, &c.”

These propositions at first sight appear very plausible; but let us investigate them a little, and ascertain how far they have been accomplished. It is a fact, that preachers increase much more rapidly than people; hence the propensity in preachers for dividing circuits, in order to make way for the rapidly increasing priesthood. By dividing a circuit, in which are stationed three preachers, the two

new circuits are made to support two preachers each. Thus, while the preachers are increasing in numbers, their power is increasing also: they can also, by this method, more easily carry into effect their “Inherent ministerial powers.” Here then is the secret.

But have they rendered any greater pastoral service to the circuits by these divisions? No. Have they been more active and zealous in extending the Redeemer’s kingdom since these divisions? Alas! alas! many instances furnish us with evidence, that they have been more at ease in Zion.

What then have the people gained by these divisions? Nothing but an increase of preachers, and an increase of expense. In proof of this, take Liverpool as an instance; before the division there were five preachers only in the circuit, and the class and ticket money about equal to the ordinary expense of the preachers. Since the division (in 1826) there have been three preachers in each circuit, and the class and ticket money, with the aid of quarterly collections, have been scarcely adequate hitherto, to meet the increasing expenditure of the circuits.

What then will this frequent division of circuits ultimately do for Methodism? It will rob the itinerant system of its chief efficacy. It will deprive the people of their rights, and load them with heavy burthens, while it paralyses their energies; and as a natural consequence piety will decline, and ere the present generation has passed away, Methodism will have nothing to boast of, more than any other church or people. Then let every society watch with a jealous eye over its own affairs, and guard against the division of any circuit, which is not absolutely warranted by local circumstances. Should these few hints meet your approbation, their insertion in the Circular will oblige,

Yours, &c.  
March, 20th 1830.

A SUBSCRIBER.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

“Z.” will perceive that we have made some use of his letter in our present number. It was received only a few days since.

We feel obliged to “MINIMUS” for the copy of an unpublished letter of the late Dr. Coke’s on the subject of religious liberty; but we are of opinion that its insertion would answer no good purpose.

The communications of “A WESLEYAN METHODIST;” “H.” of Todmorden, and others, are unavoidably postponed.

“L.” is received, but as we are of opinion that enough has been said, at least for the present, on the subject on which he treats, we cannot promise its insertion in our columns. A former letter to which he alludes has not reached us.

“VERITAS,” with an old date, is only just received.—He should have addressed it to the EDITORS.

“A WESLEYAN,” Birmingham, is at hand.

We thankfully acknowledge the receipt of donations towards the expense of establishing and carrying on the “CIRCULAR.”

From Liverpool North Circuit .....	£7	0	0
Liverpool South ditto .....	5	0	0
Nottingham ditto .....	2	2	0
Rochdale ditto .....	5	0	0
Todmorden ditto .....	1	0	0
First London South do. ....	6	0	0
Birmingham .....	1	0	0

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# The Circular

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

TO

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XIII.

31ST JANUARY, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

METHODISM is an extraordinary system—its rise was extraordinary—its progress has been extraordinary—many extraordinary men have been and still are connected with it, and extraordinary have been many of their proceedings. It has been in operation now nearly a century—it has afforded much matter for conversation to all ranks—many works respecting it have from time to time been published—and yet it is but very little understood.

It is generally known that there is a Conference—that there are district meetings—that there are travelling preachers—local preachers—class leaders—prayer leaders—Sunday-school teachers—tract distributors—missionary collectors, &c. &c.—but it is not properly understood by any but a Methodist of standing and capacity how affectionately the preachers are looked up to as the head of all, and how excellently adapted the machinery of its various institutions is to operate beneficially without clashing with each other; so that employment can be found adapted to the greatest and the least capacity, that there need be no idle persons, none but what may in some way or other according to the talent which God has given, be serving their generation and lessening the amount of evil which is in the world.

The contemplation of these things affords much gratification to many pious and well-informed persons, and if they will always submit to the direction of the preachers, aid all their schemes without inquiring into their propriety, and believe just what they please to tell them; with this amount of knowledge they may comfortably live and die.

None, however, but an *experienced* Methodist can appreciate the sufferings of those who dare to think for themselves, and to fulfil without fear or favour the duties which devolve upon them in those meetings of which they are members. Although the whole of their previous life may have been spent in acts of usefulness, and all their conduct have been unblameable, yet if in any *one* instance they oppose the plans of their spiritual rulers, the ninety and nine good deeds they may have performed shall not be so much as remembered. For their *one* transgression they are doomed to undergo a worse than inquisitorial persecution. They are branded with opprobrious epithets—looked shy upon by the preachers and their friends—distrust and enmity are often sown in their families—and the salvation of their souls is considered extremely problematical. Even the sins they may have of old committed are reaped up against them, although no doubt was previously entertained

of the soundness of their conversion, and no subsequent act of sin nor irregularity of life can be adduced against them.

We could state facts within our own knowledge substantiating even more than this, but prudence induces us to forbear.

Many persons will here be inclined to say "we have been Methodists so long and never saw this," but we would remind such persons that you may see a man day by day—converse with him and hold the freest possible intercourse which man can hold with his fellow; and yet in the most intimate friend you have, there is much which you cannot know—much he cannot communicate. There are all the inner workings of the soul—those shades of feeling—that intensity of thought—that incessant motion of the spirit which is incomminicable, which cannot be understood except by that Great Spirit from whom we all have emanated.

Just so it is in Methodism—these things of which we write are matters of *experience*—to be known they must be felt. Do you wish to learn them? Begin to act independently—deliver your sentiments freely and respectfully but without aiming to please any one but your maker; exercise your own judgment as to when or how you shall dispose of the property which God has given you, and you will soon be in a condition to bear testimony to the truth of our assertions.

We repeat it, none but an *experienced Methodist* knows these things: and what is the result? That while another looks at the beautiful proportions of the temple and exclaims "what buildings are these!" he trembles lest the glorious fabric should be utterly destroyed. While others look at the flushed and glowing countenance, supposing it to be indicative of health—he looks on it with sorrow as the harbinger of dissolution.

If such then be the consequences which corrupted Methodism entails upon a man whose voice is heard merely in meetings of which he is member, what the punishment of those would be who dare (as we have done and intend to do) to publish acts of tyranny and misrule, we cannot say, but when we have *experienced* it, our readers may depend upon being duly informed. At present we conceive sufficient has been stated to justify the course which we have adopted in withholding the names of the conductors of this work. When any good end can be answered by such a step, we will reveal ourselves; but until then, neither praise, nor censure, nor even threats, shall make us

swerve. Satisfied of the purity of motive which animates us, we give ourselves afresh to the contest and cry "God DEFEND THE RIGHT."

Notwithstanding all the opprobrium which has been heaped from certain quarters upon our devoted head, we feel thankful that we have been enabled by the liberal support of the connexion to continue our labours throughout the last year, and to commence them again this year under auspices much more favourable than we could have anticipated. In coming to a determination to hold on our way, we have asked ourselves, and the inquiry may very naturally be made by others, "what good have you done, and what probability is there of future success?"

This question might be answered by our proposing another. If all you had ever done amiss were to be published to the world, would you not be ashamed of it; and if you knew that all your future misdeeds would also be published, would you not be more cautious in your conduct?

This we all know must be the general effect of such a cause, and as individuals are shamed out of evil courses by exposure to their relatives and friends, so are bodies of men shamed out of evil practices by exposure of the public press. This effect has been produced in Methodism, as we have abundant evidence before our eyes to testify.

But in a work like this, it is requisite that a wider range should be taken, and we therefore do it by taking a summary view of the Methodist constitution.

We wish our readers to bear in mind the following proposition, viz. That all compacts or bargains must be made upon equitable principles, or they will not be lasting. If there be a preponderance either on one side or the other, it must ultimately lead to the ruin of both.

The cause of the subversion of the Polish monarchy was, that the institutions of the country were too *popular*; whilst the cause of the first French revolution was, that the government of that country was too *monarchical*. In both cases nearly the same disastrous results were produced.

The peculiar excellency of the English constitution is, that according as the people have become fit for the enjoyment of privileges they have obtained them, and thus by the timely concessions of our nobles and kings has civil war been for a long period prevented. And yet such is the beauty of our institutions, that the royal dignity has not been lessened nor its spendour eclipsed. It is in this respect as with our children. When young, we nurture and instruct them;—we advise, and in case of need, coerce them; but when they reach the years of maturity we leave them in a great measure and according to circumstances, free, and by such a course bind our authority more effectually upon them than if we always seemed to consider them as mere children.

When Bonaparte assumed the reins of government in France, their institutions, especially the press, were free even to licentiousness. Ambition having fired his mind and knowing that the influence of public opinion expressed through that medium, would prevent the fulfilment of his plans of conquest, he seized the press and subjected it to a most rigid censorship. Thus he was enabled to pursue his conquests unchecked, which finally led to his dethronement and the subversion of his empire. Had he instead of suppressing, guarded the press from abuse by wholesome laws, there is little doubt but at this moment he would have been King of France.

In 1797 the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism was finally settled, but as the preachers very unwillingly

gave up any part of their too extensive prerogative, so they endeavoured, as much as possible, to neutralize the grants which they made by retaining in their own hands the exercise of the press. Their object in this was to prevent the people communicating with each other, which would enable them to retain their powers, and render the opposition of the societies to their wishes nugatory. We quote the passage alluded to from the concessions of 1797.

"VII. In respect to all new rules, which shall be made by the Conference—It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the societies at large, and such rule should be objected to, at the first quarterly meeting in any given circuit; and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion, that the enforcing of such rule in that circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such quarterly meeting, before the second Conference. But if the rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole connexion. Nevertheless, the quarterly meetings rejecting a new law, shall not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the connexion."

We shall not here stop to consider the propriety or impropriety of such a clause, but merely remark that the result has shewn that the preachers thought to use this power themselves in any way they might think fit, and to bind the people to unqualified submission. This was not equitable, and therefore it could not ultimately stand. Until it was used by the preachers against the liberties of the people, and to defend the breaches made upon other parts of the constitution, the people did not appeal to it—nay not until every means within the compass of their power had been tried to produce a proper line of conduct on the part of the Conference.

We now proceed to apply some of the remarks already made. On the part of the Conference this contract, granting that it was honestly made, has not been faithfully performed. The preponderance in Methodistical affairs has been completely on their side. The preachers have published whatever they pleased, both in the Magazine and in pamphlets, anonymously and otherwise, so as to give the people false or partial views of distant occurrences, whilst their own misrule has been kept out of sight. So that while different parts of the connexion have been suffering, the preachers have, (from want of proper information being conveyed to the people,) been supported by the great bulk of the connexion, and thus step by step have they been enabled to subjugate almost every circuit to their sway. "The galled jade might wince" their support elsewhere, was too great for them to regard it.

It could not be, but that such a departure from uprightness would ultimately produce disastrous results. "Be sure your sin will find you out," is applicable as well to bodies of men as to individuals.

Leeds happened to be the place at which the climax was reached—it was beyond all human forbearance—their distant brethren were apprised of the circumstances, and the connexion rang with the tale of grievances. The darkness was dispelled by the light of truth spreading through the medium of the press, and the people have resumed the right of communicating with each other in open day.

The 'Circular' has, we know, had a beneficial influence; but let us not be too sanguine—the evils of Methodism have been too long taking root and spreading, for them to be removed in a day. We look for years of labour ere that proper equilibrium is obtained which is requisite to the well-being of our connexion. When once that equilibrium is realized, it will not require much exertion on our part to maintain it.

At present we shall endeavour, by advertisements of a widely extended nature to spread the knowledge of this publication, the existence of which, notwithstanding the extensive sphere of our operations, is in many places not yet known.

Were England now in the same situation with regard to religion as it was 40 years ago, the whole connexion would have been most effectually roused. At that time the pure doctrines of the gospel were not so generally preached in the churches and dissenting chapels as at the present day; there was therefore a strong motive for rallying round the standard of Methodism. But now great numbers, rather than enter the arena of controversy, retire quietly from so rough a sea into other religious communities. We however are decidedly of opinion that there are yet in Wesleyan Methodism more privileges, and a greater sphere of usefulness than are to be found in any other body, and there exists no doubt upon our minds but that, when the dream of absolute power shall have departed from the imagination of her rulers, she will again burst forth, and radiant with light divine guide myriads of redeemed spirits to the land of everlasting rest.

For the information of such as may not have seen our first number we give the following extract from page 4:

"The design of this work is to give publicity to such of the transactions of Methodism in the various circuits as may seem to require it; to answer inquiries which may be made by parties considering themselves aggrieved; to discuss all matters connected with or relating to Methodism; to persuade the wavering of the propriety of their continuing with us, and to excite the drooping to discharge every duty incumbent on them, whether as officers or private members, in the fear of God, and without fear of man."

"The ultimate object of this work is to constrain the Conference to a full and complete recognition of the rights ceded to us in 1795 and 1797, according to their fair and obvious meaning, which is sufficiently illustrated by the practice of the connexion until December 1827."

In conclusion we declare that our principles remain unchanged, and that this work has no tendency to radicalism, faction, or even reform, beyond a return to the letter and spirit of the constitution of 1797.

STRICTURES ON THE REV. DANIEL ISAAC'S PAMPHLET,  
ENTITLED

"The Rules of the Protestant Methodists brought to the test of Holy Scripture, in a letter addressed to the members of that community."  
(Concluded from page 93 of our last Circular.)

VI. Reverting now to the general subjects of these strictures, and anxious to draw to a conclusion, we remind the reader, that of what we have said, in opposition to Mr. Isaac, the substance is this: That the evangelists of the New Testament were not a *permanent*, but an *extraordinary* class of officers in the primitive church;—that they received no commission to ordain evangelists, and consequently never did ordain any successors in that office; that, nevertheless, they did receive a commission to ordain **ELDERS** in every city, and that these **ELDERS** were the "faithful men" to whom (as enjoined II Tim. ii. 2) they committed the things which they had heard of the apostles amongst many witnesses. We have, moreover, examined the Scriptural character, and inquired into the nature of the office of an **ELDER** or presbyter of the New Testament, and have shewn that to this officer was committed "the whole PASTORAL office, including the right of *ruling* as well as the duty of *feeding* the Church." In short, all the powers, rights and authorities which do or can belong to the very highest Church officers. The authorities on which we have founded these main positions are the men who now oppose us on this question; but, chiefly, that great luminary, the Rev. D. Isaac, himself, in his "*Ecclesiastical Claims Investigated*"; a work which we recommend to all our readers as the best answer that can be given to the modern D. Isaac, the evangelist. See pp. 98—101.

Mr. Isaac has further condescended to instruct us, both in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, and in the Letter which forms the subject of the present strictures, that in Wesleyan Methodism the **LEADERS** answer to the **ELDERS** or **PRESBYTER-BISHOPS** of the New Testament; and that "as some (but not all) of these presbyters were preachers, so are some of the Methodist leaders." (*Ecclesiastical Claims*, pp. 143—145.

What then is the new scheme of *ministerial power* now attempted by Mr. Isaac. It is simply to revive in Wesleyan Methodism, that *extraordinary* and long defunct officer denominated in the New Testament, an **EVANGELIST**. This officer being, like the apostles, divinely inspired, possessed extraordinary powers in *ruling* (or rather in *planting* and *settling*) the primitive churches. These extraordinary powers the itinerant preachers would wish much to possess, for the purpose of ruling Methodism. Two things are wanting to the perfection of this scheme. The *first* is a sufficient interest with Heaven to procure back the miraculous gifts and endowments which sealed the commission of the New Testament Evangelist. The *second* is to resume from the **elders** or **presbyter-bishops** those pastoral powers of *feeding* and *ruling* the Church which, by apostolical precept, were committed to these "faithful men," by those New Testament evangelists. On the former point Mr. Isaac has no hope, and therefore he is silent on the subject. The latter affords something more promising to the eye of ambition; and therefore Mr. Isaac makes it the subject of hot contention. For, be it remembered, that although avowedly writing against the rules of the "*Protestant Methodists*," his argument and his enmity are too plainly directed against the constitution of *Wesleyan Methodism*. After referring to the concessions made by the Conference in 1797 to the presbyter-bishops or leaders, and though compelled to admit them, he is careful to add, for these concessions we have "no plain authority in the New Testament."!!! (Letter, p. 15.) No, verily, Mr. Isaac, you are now turned round, and view things through a new medium! Yet, when writing his "*Ecclesiastical Claims*," this man could see nothing else in the New Testament, on the subject of Church Government, but the authority of these *leaders*, *elders*, or *presbyter-bishops*! "It has been shewn," says he, p. 139, "that the apostles ordained no spiritual officers but presbyters; and that in churches which they could not personally visit, they advised aged, grave and sober men to assume this office."

But, *cui bono*,—where is the good of restoring a privileged order of ministers, who are universally (if we except Mr. Isaac and the *Methodist Magazine*) acknowledged to have ceased for so many ages in the Christian Church? In answer to this question, we need trouble ourselves to say nothing: Mr. Isaac saves us all trouble on this head. It is still *Isaac* against *Isaac*; and the contradictions of this extraordinary man gather upon us thicker and faster.

The great object of Mr. Isaac's Letter to the Protestant Methodists is to prove that Methodist itinerant preachers have succeeded to the character, office and powers of the New Testament evangelists. He gives us, at p. 10, an enumeration of these powers, as comprising, in fact, every power of administration and rule in the Christian church. His quarrel with the Protestant Methodists is, that they have refused to submit to these assumed powers; and that, in forming for themselves a new community, their *elders*, *leaders*, or *presbyter-bishops*, have presumed to invade this holy office of the evangelist, and have denied to their missionaries, or itinerant preachers, certain powers and prerogatives which Mr. Isaac claims for them;—that is, for himself and his brethren; for it is still with Wesleyan Methodism that Mr. Isaac is concerned; and it is *our constitution*, as well as *theirs*, for which we have "no plain authority in Scripture."

Now, notwithstanding Mr. Isaac has said, in his *Ecclesiastical Claims*, p. 101, "It may be safely affirmed, that neither precept nor example can be produced from the New Testament, to support the opinion, that the apostles ordained an order of men *superior* to presbyters, (elders or leaders) and vested in them the exclusive privilege of ordaining all church officers;" yet here, *first*, Mr. Isaac sets up an order of men *superior* to presbyters, not only for the purpose of ordaining Church officers, but of ruling and governing both the presbyters and the church! And, *secondly*, the foundation of this order—the authority on which it rests, is *succession* from the apostles; for the argument is, that the office of evangelist, being founded by the apostles, is *permanent* in the church; and that the itinerant preachers have succeeded to that office, which now of divine right they claim to exercise.

To begin with the succession—Mr. Isaac in his "*Ecclesiastical Claims Examined*," (preface, p. xxii.) tells us that he is "a *dissenter* in principle;" and he employs the first essay of his book in refuting and ridiculing the Episcopalian notion of an *uninterrupted succession* of ministers, by regular ordination from the apostles. "It is stiffly maintained," he informs us, "that those ministers who cannot trace their spiritual descent through this Episcopal line are unauthorized and unaccredited teachers, intruders into the sacred ministry, vain pretenders to inspiration, and deceivers of the people, merely because they have not received the holy spirit into their noddles, like a spark of electric fire through the finger ends of a right reverend prelate." (*Ecclesiastical Claims*, p. 29.)

Now what is it that Mr. Isaac is here attempting to refute and ridicule! Not surely the *rite of ordination*; nor even the *imposition*

of hands, by which that rite is generally accompanied; for these are both apostolical, and have always been practiced in the purest churches. But it is the *succession*—the *uninterrupted succession!* And it was of vast importance to Mr. Isaac to break through this *uninterrupted succession*, because this was the only way for him to succeed at all to the Christian ministry. He therefore attacks it with all the learning and argument he can scrape together; and all his native store of coarse wit and bitter sarcasm. If, indeed, the question had related solely to an *uninterrupted succession*, the argument would have been of comparatively small importance to those not in the ministry; for then the only difference would be that the Episcopalian minister claims to be the successor of the apostles, and pretends to make out his claim by pleading a regular succession of ordination from the apostles; and Mr. Isaac claims to be a successor of the evangelists without attempting to make out his claim, insisting only that the office is permanent, and that, in fact, *HE has succeeded!*

The Church having sustained so much injury from the quarrels and contentions of the clergy may console herself, however, that their controversies are not always unproductive of good, but often tend to advance the truth. So here the contest between the regularly ordained priest, who catches the electric fire by regular succession from the apostles, and the unauthorised intruder who, forcing himself into office, succeeds *de facto*, has led to a full developement of the evils attending the succession itself, whether interrupted or not. Mr. Isaac, when he wrote his Book on Ecclesiastical Claims, did not know that he should have to write another book, in order to maintain the rights and prerogatives of his order and office as an evangelist, against the Protestant Methodists. And, being a *slap-dash, thick and thin* writer of controversy—who fights with all weapons, and drives all before him, he has unwittingly pushed his conquest too far; and fairly upset all claims to succession, regular or irregular, and whether interrupted or uninterrupted. His arguments apply with equal force to his own *de facto* succession to the office of an evangelist, as to the succession of My Lord Bishop to the apostolic office. Let us adduce an instance, supplying the slight change of the terms.

"If it were true that bishops (*Methodist itinerant preachers*) are the successors of the apostles, (*evangelists*) it would not follow that they only have the right to ordain ministers, unless a restrictive clause to that effect could be found in the New Testament; but the chapter and verse have never yet been produced."

"But the bishops (*itinerant preachers*) are not the successors of the apostles (*evangelists*.) They do not possess apostolical (*evangelical*) qualifications. They can neither work miracles, nor predict with certainty future events, nor discern spirits, &c.

"The government of the Church is supposed to be one part of the apostolic (*evangelistic*) office; and the bishops (*itinerant preachers*) as governors, are said to be the successors of the apostles (*evangelists*.) But this can give them no *exclusive* right to ordain; because those who succeed to any other part of the same office, have on this ground, an equal right with themselves to confer holy orders. All preachers must be qualified to ordain, since it has been shewn that preaching is an important and essential part of the apostolic office. The same remark applies to those who perform the rite of Baptism." Eccles. Claims, pp. 80, 81.

We must remind the reader, that the above sentiments proceed from Mr. Isaac, a member of the Methodist Conference, which denies to all "preachers" amongst us, except the *itinerants*, the right either of governing or of administering the ordinances of the Church, and who, in spite of his above recorded opinions, now complains of the concessions of 1797, which granted certain powers to local preachers and leaders, as having "no plain authority in the New Testament."

The burthen of Mr. Isaac's song about the succession, is as follows; viz.

"Having shewn that the chain of succession is broken, the exclusive power claimed by the priests of adding to their own body must be given up, and the right of the laity to assume or confer the holy office must be granted;" (Eccles. Claims, p. 79;) that is, Mr. Isaac had a right to step into his present office; and every other man has the same right! And yet this same Mr. Isaac assumes office in confederacy with a body of divines, who deny this right to the local preachers and leaders, who (according to his own account) are, nevertheless, the true presbyter-bishops of Wesleyan Methodism! and, persisting to deny the priest's office to these presbyter-bishops, in his own connexion, he has still the effrontery to anathematize the Protestant Methodists, for withholding some of its *ruling* powers from their missionaries. All which matters, taken together, remind us of that ancient saying of Cato, that "he wondered how one priest could look another in the face without laughing."

Mr. Isaac having thus blown away the "pretended succession" of priests, by proving it altogether unfounded, and ridiculous, would, doubtless, if a prudent man, have paused at this point, and been con-

tented with his spoils. But Mr. Isaac is not a champion who can stay the conflict, so long as there remains anything to be attacked and overcome. Luckily for the liberties of the Church, therefore, but unluckily for himself, he discovered a second enemy, skulking behind the former; and perceived that the distinction of "clerical order," in the Church, was only screened and sheltered by this boasted doctrine of the *uninterrupted succession*.

In the zeal of conquest, it never entered the head of our champion that he might one day have to defend his own "order," with its exclusive powers and prerogatives, against Protestant Methodism; and, therefore, he thus decries his newly-discovered foe: "The clergy pretend to be a distinct order of men from the laity, possessed of a divine right, and independent power, to do what they please in the Church. Acting upon these principles, they have assumed the exclusive privilege of making clergymen;—they have persuaded the state to deny the people the right of choosing them; and to compel the people to support them." Eccles. Claims, p. 129.

Advancing, then, single-handed against the whole order of the clergy, he first warms them to strip off all their canonicals, even to the very name, that they may fight fair and unencumbered;—for, having discovered by a note of Macknight on I. Peter, v. 1-3, that the word *λαός*, *clergy*, properly signifies a *lot*; and that, from the land of Canaan being divided among the Israelites by *lot*, the word came afterwards to signify an *inheritance*, and was applied generally to congregations of believers, who are God's *lot* or *portion*,—he exclaims, "Here we see the impudence of Church officers in appropriating to themselves, exclusively, a term, which in primitive times, was common to *all* Christians. All good men are, in the Scripture sense of the word, *clergymen*. They are God's *lot* or *heritage*; or in a more modern phrase, *the people of God.*" Eccles. Claims, p. 103.

And now, woe! to the whole order of the clergy! and woe! we may add, to the modern New Testament evangelists! The following are some of the deadly weapons hurled by Mr. Isaac himself, under which both orders are alike destined to fall.

1. *That to maintain such a distinct order of men, is against public policy.* "Now, suppose such a system acted upon by any other craft than priesthood, what would be the consequence? Suppose the tailors, for instance: These nimble-fingered gentlemen form themselves into a corporate body, and no one is allowed to make a pair of breeches, [Mr. Isaac possesses an elegant turn of mind] or to stop a hole in a pair of old ones, who has not served an apprenticeship to the trade, and been duly initiated into the order, by a master tailor, with the ceremony of putting a thimble on his finger and a goose into his hand. Every parish is provided with one of these state tailors, and obliged to support him in a genteel style, to keep up the credit and respectability of the order. Who is so blind as not to see that, upon this plan, we should be in danger of appearing in the streets in a *birth-day suit*? There is no competition. The livelihood of the man does not depend upon the quantity or quality of his work, or upon the good opinion of his employers. According to this scheme we might have a corporation of *gentlemen tailors*, but we should have a nation in a state of nudity, or only clothed in rags." Eccles. Claims, p. 129.

2. *That it is contrary to divine prescription.* "Our Lord and his disciples made the laity the guardians of orthodoxy. Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Eccles. Claims, p. 126.

3. *That it is against the interests of the truth itself.* "The laity have no other interest in religion than the salvation of their souls, and therefore can be under no temptation to corrupt it. But the clergy have too often aimed at pomp, wealth and power; and as Christianity is opposed to these, they have laboured to keep the people in ignorance the more easily to secure their object; and this ignorance is pleaded as the reason why a distinct order of men should be supported to perform the services of the sanctuary; and dictate the opinions of the worshippers; like a physician who has injured the constitutions of his patients and thereby rendered himself necessary to them as long as they live. Had they understood something of the healing art, he would not have dared to give them pernicious drugs; their knowledge would have secured his honesty, and they might have profited by his prescriptions.—A rogue will practise his impositions upon the ignorant, but he will be honest with the wise, through fear of detection." Eccles. Claims, p. 128.

After thus defending the rights of the laity against the claims of the clergy, as a "distinct and privileged order," and insisting that the trade ought to be thrown open to all who will assume it, Mr. Isaac

now comes forward, in behalf of a party in the Methodist Conference, who claim, as "*a privileged order*," to *rule and feed* the whole Methodist connexion, with absolute authority and sway! He even justifies their plain and palpable breaches of covenant; and can now see "*no plain authority in the New Testament*," for any concessions to the laity, that shall interfere with this new order of evangelists!—Forgive us, gentle reader, if we turn with *loathing* from men who can contend for or against the truth, according to the miserable dictates of a temporising and selfish policy. Happily for the truth, she is covered with the shield of more able and less suspicious advocates; and we cannot therefore do better than close this article with the following extract from the Methodist Magazine for February, 1827.

"Heresies have seldom or never taken their rise from the mass of the people. Look at the history, trace the origin, of the principal corruptions of Christianity which have prevailed at different periods, and you will uniformly find, that they commenced in the higher classes, among men of leisure and speculation; that they were the product of perverted ingenuity and of misapplied talent. Adapted to subserve the purposes of avarice and ambition, they were the invention of spiritual wickedness in high places. The commonalty, tenacious of the habits of thinking and acting to which they have been trained, are slow in adopting novelties, and the last to be misled by the illusions of hypothesis, or the false refinements of theory. The progress of opinion is from the higher to the lower orders; and it is as unnatural for it to begin at the bottom, as for water to ascend from the valleys to the hills. The doctrine of transubstantiation is too much at war with common sense, to have originated with the common people, any more than the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, the worship of the host, or the infallibility of the pope; all of which were gradually obtruded on the laity by the artifices of a designing priesthood, whose interest and ambition they promoted. Far from running into these absurdities of their own accord, the people, harassed, confounded, and dismayed, were hunted into the toils by men who made merchandise of souls. Let but the great body of the people be enlightened by the word of God, let them comprehend its truths, and imbibe its maxims, and they will form the firmest bulwarks against the encroachments of popery, as well as every other erroneous and delusive system. It is in a virtuous and an enlightened population, and especially in a yeomanry and peasantry, informed and actuated by the true spirit of religion, we look for the security and preservation of its best interests. It was among them that Christianity commenced its earliest triumphs; among them the Reformation begun by Luther found its first and fastest friends: and, as it was in this department of society our holy religion first penetrated, should the time arrive for its disappearance in other quarters, it is here that it will find its last and safe retreat."—*The Rev. Robert Hall.*

#### FIRST LONDON WEST CIRCUIT,

(Concluded from page 96 of our last.)

I regret that I have not only to complain of the observations made by you, already referred to, but also of your subsequent conduct at the Quarterly Meeting. On former occasions, you excused yourself, for preventing the meeting from hearing and considering the Resolutions, which were on those occasions brought forward, because they were not previously submitted to you: thus claiming a *power* which materially abridges the *rights* of a Quarterly Meeting. However, out of courtesy to you, I sent you a copy of the Resolutions the day before the meeting, informing you that it was intended to propose them. The use you made of the information I thus gave you, was to lay your plan, so as to prevent me from introducing them, or at least, not until you had so prepared the meeting, that it should have its feelings excited against the consideration of them.—Before the usual business was disposed of, you rose and addressed the meeting; you laid down what you chose to designate the *order* of the meeting, (which order was entirely your own,) and stated that you would not *allow* any person to speak to any other subject than the one given by you.

If, Sir, I had not felt that I was engaged in the performance of a public duty, such conduct would have occasioned me to retire with disgust; but as personal feelings must sometimes be sacrificed to the performance of our duty,

painful as were the circumstances in which you had placed me, I resolved to attempt to discharge the obligation, which I believe devolved upon me. To prevent as far as possible, the excitement of any unpleasant feeling, I endeavoured to conform to the order which you had laid down, which was, to consider the best means to promote peace, unity, and prosperity in the Circuit. No subject of greater importance could possibly be taken into consideration; and the *free and fair* discussion of it was all that I wished for: this I believe, would have led to the adoption of the Resolutions which I intended to propose. To me it appeared the most natural method of considering the subject you had proposed: first, to inquire into the cause of the evils which had interrupted our peace, unity, and prosperity. You said "*the cause* was, the conduct of those men who had signed the pamphlet;" which I denied and offered to disprove. This you prevented me from doing, refusing to allow me to proceed with the observations I was making. I should not complain of such prevention, nor of the repeated interruptions to which I then, as on former occasions, was subjected, if I had violated any ordinary rule, by which well regulated meetings are governed. But I can conceive of nothing more degrading, than for men to be called together for the purpose of transacting business, and then to be prevented from doing the very things for which they are assembled, unless they take such views, and advocate the same measures, as are taken and advocated by the Superintendent Preacher. And that man, who, by aiding and abetting such proceedings, promotes his *own* intellectual and official debasement, is of all others the most degraded.

As you had taken no notice of the Resolutions I intended to propose; I thought it necessary to inform the meeting that I had sent you such Resolutions, and offered to read them, and move their adoption without making any observations upon them, leaving them entirely to any opinion the meeting should spontaneously express: if you would consent to put them in like manner. The object of this proposition was not to avoid discussion, for, as gold shines brighter for being rubbed, so truth becomes more luminous when subjected to free and candid discussion. I therefore, having no other desire than to see truth triumph, could have nothing to fear from a fair and full investigation of the Resolutions which I wished to offer to the meeting; my object was to prevent the necessity of a lengthened discussion, which you had deprecated, and which perhaps was not necessary, after all the discussion which the subject had received in our regular meetings.

This offer did not meet with your approbation; instead of acceding thereto, you prevented me from proposing, and also even from reading the Resolutions, declaring you "*would not allow them to be read! nor concur in anything proposed by any man who had signed the pamphlet; nor allow any such men to propose or read to the meeting any Resolutions intended to be forwarded to the Conference!!*" adding, "*the Conference will not listen to any statements coming from such men, unless they first scratch out, or cut off their names from the pamphlet they have signed, and then, although it might forgive them, it never would regard them as it regarded those *honest* men who had not been guilty of such conduct!!!*" I inquire of *what* conduct have they been *guilty*? If they have merited *such* language and treatment, why are they not put upon their trial, that they may either be regularly deprived of the rights of their offices, by being deprived of their stations in the Society, or prove that they have done nothing to deserve the imputations

which are cast upon them? Ought men, who have never been put upon their trial, to be treated as men who have been *convicted* and *sentenced* to a deprivation of their stations in the Society? I deny that they have been guilty of any other offence than that of declaring their *honest* opinion of the conduct of the Conference in some of its late proceedings; do they for so doing deserve to be distinguished from "*honest* men," and therefore by an inference to be spoken of as *dishonest* men? Upon what principle can the Conference refuse to allow "such men to address it?" A convicted felon may address the highest authorities in this realm. And if the Conference would refuse to allow the men who signed the pamphlet to address it, by so doing it would exemplify other feelings and other conduct than those it recommends to others. Can it be reconciled with the dictates of God's Word, for any men, however dignified or exalted they may conceive themselves to be, to refuse to listen to their fellow men, because they have expressed an opinion opposed to their conduct in certain cases; unless they first disavow and retract such opinion?

Such were the reasons assigned by you, for resolving to deprive all those persons who had signed the pamphlet of their rights as members of the Quarterly Meeting. Surely some of those persons, on account of their long continued attachment to Methodism,—their disinterested labours,—the pecuniary support they have cheerfully contributed,—the heavy responsibilities they sustain, without any possibility of deriving any profit either for themselves or families,—their long continued, upright, and undeviating conduct, and their hitherto uniform and steady attachment to Methodism, deserved better treatment at your hands. But, alas! it appears that to censure the conduct of the Conference is regarded as a forfeiture of all that respect and esteem to which they are entitled !!

When I complained of your conduct, in thus depriving me of my right as a member of the meeting, you informed me that I might accuse you to the district meeting, or to the Conference. To attempt to seek redress, by either of the methods you pointed out, would be so utterly useless, that no man of common sense would think of resorting to either of them, except for the purpose of showing the uselessness of such modes of redress. The district meeting and the Conference, are composed of men who now stand pledged to support superintendents in refusing to put to the vote, any resolutions dissonant with their decisions. You know that the late Conference expressed its approbation of the conduct of certain superintendents, who refused to allow the regular meetings in their circuits, to express their opinion on the proceedings of the Conference on the Leeds' case; notwithstanding the Conference, in its authorized printed documents, has explicitly recognized the right of all our regular meetings, to express their sentiments; and professes the greatest readiness to listen to their complaints. Even the Leeds' special district meeting of 1827 as, in its minutes, acknowledged, that "It is an **UNQUESTIONABLE** and **FUNDAMENTAL** principle with us, that the paternal ear of Conference shall at all times be open to the applications of all our people, and especially of all our regular meetings, whether of leaders or trustees." "If were possible that the Conference could have *designed* the clause in the law of 1820 to **ABOLISH OR ABRIDGE THE RIGHT** of those bodies to appeal to it for advice, protection, or redress, **WHENEVER THEY** deemed such appeal to be necessary,—such a design would at once prove—the tyranny of the Conference over those whom it is bound to help and protect !!!"

This "**UNQUESTIONABLE AND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE AND RIGHT**" has been by you abridged, by your not permitting the "regular quarterly meeting of this circuit" to appeal to the Conference for protection and redress, "**WHEN IT** deemed such appeal to be necessary," and it is in consequence therefore, that the proceedings of which you have complained have been taken,—that the signers of the pamphlet before referred to, adopted the method of signing, printing, and circulating it; intending, not to sow the seeds of discord and division, (which has been untruly affirmed,) but as the only method they could take of declaring their "*honest*" sentiments, on a subject in which they felt themselves deeply interested.

It has, however, been said that we proposed to address the Conference on subjects in which we have no interest or concern; this we utterly deny. As members of a "**Connexion**," we must be interested in whatever relates to the Connexion, of which we are members; and we have not only felt ourselves to be interested in the subjects on which we have proposed to address the Conference, but have also felt much concern and grief on account of the view we have been compelled to take of these subjects. If it could be proved that we have no interest or concern in the subjects on which we have desired to communicate our sentiments to the Conference, still, as "**it is an unquestionable and fundamental principle, and right that all our regular meetings shall appeal to the Conference whenever THEY think such appeal to be necessary;**" if a superintendent, because he is averse to an appeal refuses to allow such an appeal to be regularly proposed to the meeting, or by any other means, authoritatively prevents any regular meeting from addressing the Conference; either words have no meaning, or he violates our laws,—violates "**an UNQUESTIONABLE and FUNDAMENTAL principle**, and deprives the meeting of '**ITS RIGHT TO APPEAL** to the Conference, **WHENEVER IT THINKS** such appeal to be necessary.'" And, according to the recorded sentiment of the Leeds special district meeting, "such conduct proves the tyranny of those who do so, over those whom they are bound to help and protect !!!"

Recent proceedings having fully demonstrated that the Conference, will justify superintendents in acting as above described, and even applaud them for so doing, thereby encouraging them to prevent the people from expressing their sentiments on the subjects which have recently agitated the Connexion; and thus, although it legislates for the people, it evinces an unwillingness to listen to their complaints. The only course now left for those who value their Methodistical privileges is for them steadily to persevere in the use of every lawful means, till they gain the ear of Conference, obtain the redress of their grievances, and an assurance that their Methodistical rights shall not be violated. It never can be expected that men will tamely submit to have their rights forcibly taken away, they ought rather to be willing to be loaded with opprobrium, or even expelled from office and membership, painful as such a result would be to those who for a long period have been attached to the connexion, and especially to those who have long laboured in its ministry, and have in some of its members seals to their ministry.

If any persons should still endeavour to excite prejudice against those, who in this circuit have endeavoured to send an appeal to the Conference, by affirming that although we have professed to be contending only for the preservation of Methodistical discipline, as established by mutual agreement between preachers and people in 1797; that we have

been endeavouring to subvert the constitution then established. To refute such calumny, (for calumny it is by whomsoever uttered,) it is only necessary to refer to the resolutions, a copy of which was sent to you, and which would have been submitted to the last quarterly meeting, but for the part you then took, as before explained. If, Sir, you had allowed those resolutions to have been fairly proposed to the meeting, whatever might have been their fate, you would have done much towards restoring union and peace to the circuit.

To me it is a matter of sincere and deep regret to be placed in such circumstances, as to be under the necessity, either to submit to what I conceive to be a deprivation of my Methodistical rights, and silently to witness the overthrow of those bulwarks by which Methodism has been protected, for upwards of thirty years, or to adopt measures which may produce an injurious effect on the minds of those persons, whose religious feelings depend more upon their opinion of the conduct of others, than upon their knowledge of, and faith in, the Word of God. If the evils of which I have complained related only to myself, or if I did not regard them in their ultimate consequences, as pregnant with fearful results, I certainly should think it highly improper to do any thing, by which a "weak brother may be offended;" but when by no other means, a greater and more general evil can be opposed; then, even those who are regarded on account of their office, as examples of all that is pure and excellent, may and ought to be complained of, and remonstrated with. Such a case, I believe now exists, through the interpretation *now* given to the concessions made to the societies in 1797,—an interpretation which places the discipline of the connexion in a very different point of view, to that in which the societies have ever before contemplated it, till in 1827, by peculiar sagacity it was discovered; an interpretation, which, if persisted in, will I believe at no very distant period, be productive of the most alarming results to the whole connexion. The power recently exercised by several superintendents in London and in other places, to prevent the "regular meetings," from taking the decisions upon the Leeds' Case, and the minute of the last Conference on the discipline of the connexion, into their consideration, is, I think, sufficiently illustrative of what may ere long be expected !!

Thus to address you, Sir, is by no means pleasant to me. I have ever since I knew you, felt great respect and esteem for you; and as I do not believe that you have intended to injure any one, but have thought it necessary to adopt the measures you have taken, in order to uphold the views *now* taken by the Conference; nothing but a sense of public obligation, a regard to my own character, and the character of many of those who have signed the pamphlet, could have induced me to write to you this letter. But if I had suffered the censures pronounced by you, upon us, to have gone unanswered, many well meaning persons, who I believe know little or nothing of the subject in dispute, but who generally take for granted that all certain persons say must be right, might conclude that we had been endeavouring to promote discord, and division, and had been guilty of practices the most immoral.

For myself, and I believe, I may add also for all those who signed the pamphlet, I again declare that I am not conscious of having violated any law, moral or Methodistical, in signing it. What I have done, I have done not with a view to injure, but to promote, the best interests of Methodism. I have for several years been sincerely attached to the connexion, and still wish, if possible, to promote its interests, but never can I approve of the interpretation *now* given to the laws of 1797, nor consent to submit to the power recently assumed to controul our "regular meetings." I still feel it to be a duty to oppose, by every lawful means as far as I am able, all attempts to abolish, abridge, or explain away the concessions made to the local meetings in 1797, as understood and acted upon up to 1827, whatever opprobrium I may have to sustain. If for so doing I should be driven from the connexion, I shall at least have the satisfaction that arises from a consciousness of not having, in the part I have taken in this business, sought my own ease, nor the honour which cometh from

man; but of having borne my "honest" testimony against measures which I again repeat, if persisted in, will, I believe, produce incalculable evils in the connexion, and ultimately recoil upon those by whom they are promoted.—Praying that God, of his infinite mercy, may guide us all into the perfect knowledge of His will, and give us grace to obey Him in all things, I remain, reverend Sir, your obedient servant,

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#### LIVERPOOL METHODIST DAY AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS

##### TO THE EDITORS OF THE CIRCULAR.

**GENTLEMEN**—The annual meeting of the subscribers to the Methodist Day and Sunday Schools, was held in the vestry of Mount-pleasant Chapel, on Monday evening, the 10th instant, and as there are some extraordinary circumstances connected with that meeting, and the meeting of the sub-committees held immediately previous, which, in my opinion are decidedly contrary to the principles of true Christian liberty, I have thought that it might not be improper, through the medium of your valuable 'Circular,' to state these circumstances, together with a few suitable animadversions on the same.

It may perhaps be proper to state, for the information of many of your numerous readers, that in Liverpool there are three Daily schools and six Sabbath schools connected with the Methodists; in the former, 670 boys and 450 girls, beside 350 infants, are under daily tuition in the various branches of useful knowledge, including of course, religious instruction. These schools are visited (or ought to be) once a week by the preachers, for the purpose of delivering to the children an address on the great concerns of religion; and there is good reason to believe, that the instruction thus afforded them has not been in vain. In the Sunday schools before mentioned are to be found about 950 children, generally taken from the poorest of the poor, the greater part of whom receive no instruction in any other school. Both the Daily and Sabbath schools are supported from one general fund, raised by private subscriptions and donations, and by annual public collections in the chapels. Once a year a general meeting of the subscribers and officers is held, for the purpose of receiving the annual report and electing committees,—one for the management of the Day schools, and another for the management of the Sunday schools, for the ensuing year.

As before stated, the last meeting was held on the 10th instant; the Rev. W. Henshaw in the chair. But before I relate any particulars of the annual meeting of subscribers, it may be well to notice an occurrence in the meeting of the Day school committee, held previously on the same evening.

The report from the committee for the Sunday schools was found to contain the following information, viz. that the committee approved of the united recommendation made to it by the superintendents and teachers in the various Sunday schools, to assemble the children on the afternoon of Good Friday next, for the purpose of taking them to chapel, to receive an address from one of the preachers; and afterwards, that the superintendents and teachers should assemble in some convenient place, for the purpose of spending an hour in friendly conversation on the best methods of carrying on the work in which they are engaged, so as to impart to the objects of their charge, by the blessing of God, the greatest quantum of good. Previously to the annual meeting, Mr. Henshaw, superintendent of the South Circuit, had been waited upon, for the purpose of obtaining his consent to the use of Mount-pleasant Chapel for the contemplated service on Good Friday, which consent was promptly given; but, when the arrangements thus made by the superintendents and teachers, and confirmed by the committee, had been read as part of the Sunday schools' report, Mr. Bunting immediately, and with great vehemence, exclaimed, *I'LL NOT ALLOW IT !!* assigning as a reason, that the *day selected* ought to be devoted to *far more sacred purposes*, and reiterated the pithy exclamation, *"I'LL NOT ALLOW IT!"* A great part of the meeting appeared to be quite astounded, and others, whose attention had not been so closely given to the subject matter which had moved the ire of the reverend gentleman, were quite at a loss to discover the cause of his excitement, coupled with his energetic and vehement *"I'LL NOT ALLOW IT!"* It was here very properly observed by a member of the meeting, that there could be nothing so objectionable and startling in the proposition, as our friends the Dissenters had for several years, and with good effect, acted upon the plan now recommended; and moreover, that if the *unanimous* recommendations of superintendents and teachers, and the deliberations and decisions of committees, were *thus* to be overturned and set a-nought, it might possibly happen that difficulties would arise in obtaining suitable persons to fill those useful and important offices; to which the reverend gentleman before mentioned replied, *"NOT AT ALL. It is well for us not to think too much of ourselves. If the persons who are now engaged in this work should all be dead and buried to-morrow, there would be little if any difficulty in filling up their places.* And with regard to the practice of the Dissenters, *WE ARE NOT DISSENTERS* but adhere to the observance of the old festivals of the Establishment. After some further observations, the matter was set at rest by requesting the Sunday school committee to reconsider the matter.

Nothing of much importance to be noticed here occurred in the annual meeting, until a vote of thanks to the preachers for their attention to the Day schools during the past year was proposed; when an individual rose to inquire to what extent the service had been performed, for which

the thanks of the meeting were proposed. If I am correctly informed, that individual was prepared to shew, from the visitors' books, that of the seven travelling preachers resident in Liverpool, one had not attended the schools at all, and none of the others more than seven times, with the exception of one who had attended thirty-one times. I think you will agree with me that such an honourable fact as the last named, is worthy of having associated with it the name of the individual who has thus so singularly performed his duty, the Rev. Thos. Rowland. The total number of visits made by the travelling preachers during the year is fifty-three, whereas if the schools had been visited in regular order, agreeably to ancient usage, the number of weekly visits (after allowing for holidays) would have amounted, in the three schools, to 144; thus there appears a deficiency of ninety-one visits. This statement will be sufficient to show how far an indiscriminate vote of thanks was called for.

Well, gentlemen, will you believe me when I inform you how this inquiry was met. The Rev. Mr. B., with great warmth, "And what is that to brother \*\*\*\*\* whether I and my colleagues have or have not performed our duty; we have not come here to be catechised by him, or by any other member of this meeting. No; if he has any charge against us, it must be preferred before a higher tribunal; let him bring us before a special district meeting. As in an army, so in Methodism; there are privates' duties, and corporals' duties, and sergeants' duties, and there are also GENERALS' duties. I hope I know my duty; and by God's help will perform it; but the HOW, and the WHEN, and the WHERE, must be left to myself, without interference!" Don't you wonder, Messrs. Editors, that the meeting did not rise up en masse and protest against such an outrage upon its common sense; how they could hear such ridiculous bombast and keep their seats, I know not. Surely, if that individual was a member of the meeting, he had an undoubted right to speak as to the propriety or impropriety of any resolution submitted to it, or I know nothing of the proceedings of public meetings. It is much to be regretted, that an amendment was not proposed to the effect, "That this meeting greatly regrets to find that the weekly visits of the preachers to the schools have, in the year just ended, been almost totally discontinued, and respectfully requests that they will, in the year ensuing, be more frequent in their attendance, viewing, as this meeting does, the religious instruction of the children as all important." I cannot help thinking, that had such an amendment been proposed, it would have been unanimously carried in an assembly of *honest men*;—however, the treasurer, on putting the resolution of thanks to the vote, pronounced it nearly unanimously carried! You will here exclaim, *what a farce!* and so say I. Is there either Christian principle or common honesty in such proceedings? I trow not.

Is it not a wonderful discovery that Good Friday is so sacred a day, as not to admit of an assemblage of children for the purpose of being addressed by a preacher? The exceeding absurdity of such an assumption could, I am convinced, be shewn by almost any of the children in the schools. Is it more sacred than the Sabbath, on which the children are regularly assembled? Surely not. How, then, would the sacredness of the day be infringed upon by the proposition of the superintendents and teachers? It cannot relate to the first part; viz. the assembling of the children at the schools, and the conducting them to a place of worship, to be suitably addressed by a minister of the gospel. This is so truly good and worthy of the most sacred day, that it must surely have been the latter part of the proposition that was deemed by the Rev. gentleman so irreverent and impious; viz. that the conductors of the schools should afterwards meet together and spend an hour in conversation on the best methods of conveying religious instruction to the children under their care. But even this part of the business, it is to be presumed, will not, to ordinary minds at least, appear so unworthy of the day selected for the purpose, as to call forth the choler of the Rev. gentleman, and cause him to hurl forth his "thunderbolts of ecclesiastical censure!" It would require, one would suppose, extraordinary penetration of mind to discover, in the proposed after exercise of the day, anything incompatible with the design of Him whose sacrificial death is; as on this day, more particularly brought to our remembrance; for Christ Jesus, we are informed, came into the world "to seek and save that which was lost," which is, I presume, the grand object of the institution of Sabbath Schools; and surely, any consultation of those who are actively engaged in carrying on such Godlike institutions with the view of increasing the efficiency of their plans and measures, is pleasing to that God to whom we must all "give an account of the deeds done in the body."

It will appear quite clear to you from this and other specimens with which we have been favoured of priestly domination and overbearing authority, that nothing is so desirable to certain influential preachers in the Methodist connexion as unrestrained rule and power; their will must be the governing principle, and all meetings for discussion on any subject must be as much as possible prevented! But will "the people thus submit?" Are these the times to lord it over God's heritage? Experience replies in the negative.

I conclude my letter (already too long) by offering the following advice. Let certain preachers learn to be more conciliatory in their manners towards those who in some points happen to differ from them. Let them consider themselves as the servants of God's church, for Christ's sake, and be willing to become "all things to all men," and thus learn more of "Him who was meek and lowly in heart," then will they always find the people of their charge acquiescing and co-operating in their designs and labours—then will opposition and discord cease, and brethren (preachers and people) will be of one heart, and of one mind, intent only on one grand object—the glory of God in the salvation of men.

Liverpool, 20th January, 1831.

Your's truly, W. B.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

Gentlemen,

I have been accustomed to read and to notice the progress of your very useful and impartial publication for the last twelve months; that is, from its commencement; and I think now, that I cannot do less, at the beginning of another year, than offer my heartfelt thanks for the courage and the zeal which you have exhibited, and the labour which you have bestowed on this Methodist offspring up to the present period. I might also observe, that you have kept to your text—you have adhered hitherto to the profession made in the prospectus of your publication.

Your publication did I say? It is not your publication. It is the *recept*—the medium of appeal of a great body of Christian brethren in a matter of vital, and, I may say, of everlasting importance; and that not only to themselves in the British empire, but to the cause of Methodism particularly, and of Christianity generally, wherever it is established. When I say, therefore, that you have my thanks, I mean it on public grounds; it is for the information which I, in common with many others, have derived from your labours—labours, I am convinced, which have brought upon you, from interested men and their humble servants, for office or for gain sake, many sarcastic and unchristian reflections; but although reviled, you do not revile again.

I confess that, for many years, I have wished that we had such a vehicle of information as you now present, at proper intervals, and at such a cheap rate. You need not be told, gentlemen, that Methodists like things that are concise and luminous, as well as cheap: such is your "Circular."

If I have formed a correct estimate of your candour, and of course, of your integrity, you will not be offended if I offer a few observations in this and in future letters, on what I humbly deem defective in your expository journal. I am inclined to think, worthy Editors, that, from the date of your first number to the present time, you have not exhibited the Methodist constitution of 1795 and 1797 in its true garb: neither the object nor the result of the legislative assemblies of those years appear in their proper light.

You have uniformly appealed to a certain code or body of laws drawn up at that crisis, which, if adhered to on the part of preachers and people, would ensure good will and good conduct. You appear to view certain scraps put together by our ministers at that and subsequent periods through such a favourable medium, and you refer to it at every convenient opportunity as your *summum bonum* and sure anchorage, that one is really almost unwilling to disturb your complacency and apparent security.

Now, gentlemen, from what I have read and heard of the Plan of Pacification and certain concessions, I can see nothing in it that affords real security—except on one side; nothing tangible for our members to rest upon. If I am correctly informed about the year 1795, such a feeling had been excited in the Methodist connexion by the continual encroachment of the preachers on the rights of the people, that a correspondence was opened by certain members of the Methodist body on this subject, which led to an agreement on their part to meet in Leeds at the same time as the ensuing Conference. This step, it must be admitted, was an obvious breach of Methodist law, though afterwards winked at and sanctioned by the Methodist Conference. What! certain lay members assemble together to state their grievances and to assert their rights without a preacher at their head to direct them and to keep them in order! Supposing your "Circular" had been set on foot at that juncture, we might surely expect that the late affair, the soul-destroying affair at Leeds, would have been prevented!

As soon as the preachers (in 1795) assembled, the object of the lay meeting was forwarded to them officially. The business was proposed to be done as in open day. Among men of the world, we generally find that a frank avowal of any object to an opponent, will commonly elicit a frank reply: here we have an exception. We have often remarked, that when a preacher in our connexion finds it difficult to decide a point, or if he finds it advantageous to his interest to claim delay, he is never at a loss—he must consult his colleagues—or, he must refer the matter to the district or to Conference; this is termed good management. After this manner did our heads of houses out-general the delegates assembled in 1795 at Leeds. They claimed delay: they invited another set of delegates from the different circuits, men of their own way of thinking, to enable them to settle the mighty dispute about authority, &c. This third estate, as it may be designated, co-operating with the preachers in all their designs, soon placed an extinguisher on the labours of the people's chosen representatives. By what means, it may be asked? The answer is obvious: by the most effectual means that could be devised—by *NON-INTERCOURSE!* Thus, were the truly Christian purposes of these worthy delegates set aside and nullified!

The societies were then *affectionately* addressed, (but not by Mr. Watson, who had scarcely made up his mind which side to take,) and told that the preachers had made immense sacrifices for peace sake, &c.—The new constitution was promulgated; and with it a set of "miscellaneous regulations," which should have the effect—the convenient effect—of confirming, or of explaining away, or of neutralizing, any article in the said constitution—the bulwark of Methodism!

Bear with me, gentlemen, if I entreat you, ere I conclude, not to quote Mr. Wesley's memorable words again, "they will not *thus* submit." The people *did* submit; they *do* submit; but they *will not always* submit. The "Circular to Wesleyan Methodists," the voice of the people from Liverpool to Leeds, and from Leeds to London, and Bristol, and the West of England, declares this: the signs of the times are in favour of Christian liberty: "truth is mighty, and will prevail!"

If I have not tired your patience by the length of this epistle, I propose resuming the subject in your succeeding "Circulars."—I remain, gentlemen, yours respectfully,

CYRUS.

\* \* \* We believe the authority of our correspondent for the details given above is indubitable. His further communications will be acceptable; but we respectfully inform him, that we have already rejected some able articles against the securities of the constitution of 1797, and that our settled purpose is to prevent our columns being made the vehicle of discussion on that subject. The object of this publication is to cause that constitution, such as it is, to be respected.—EDITS.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We are truly sorry that our want of space this month compels us to postpone the letter of "G. R." of Sheffield. We hope to be able to insert it in our next.

Our friend in the Principality, who we understand has a communication for us, will much oblige by forwarding it as soon as possible.

We thankfully acknowledge the receipt of further Donations from the Liverpool North Circuit, amounting to £4.

Our Correspondents generally are respectfully informed, that any communication intended for immediate insertion, should be forwarded in good time; say, to be in Liverpool not later than the 20th of the month.

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# The Circular

TO  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XV.

31ST MARCH, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

## THE GENERAL CHAPEL FUND.

WE recommend to the attention of our readers the recently published "Twelfth Report of the General Chapel Fund." We do not often meet with documents in Methodism so important, and so easily understood, as this Report; and, as it also gives rise to many interesting remarks, we shall make a few extracts from it, for the benefit of those of our readers who may not have it in possession.

The committee of the chapel fund commence their address, by expressing "their fears, that they shall weary "its numerous friends and subscribers with the repetition, "year after year, of their complainings. They have, "however, no other alternative; but must continue to tell, "again and again, their 'tale of woe,' irksome as it may "have become to many, until a great alteration and im- "provement in the income of the fund, or in the circum- "stances of the claimants upon it, shall have enabled "them to exchange complaint for congratulation." As to this happy consummation of their labours, which the committee seem faintly to think possible, we, on the contrary, despair of seeing it realized, under the present management and control. The authors of the Report do, indeed, put off their expectations until two very unlikely events shall take place, viz. "a great alteration and improvement in the income of the fund, or in the circumstances of the claimants upon it." But these are the points upon which we are at issue with them, upon their own showing, as we shall shortly make evident.

The committee have singularly called their Report a "tale of woe"; they might also have called it a "tale of

extravagance," or what would be still more exact, "The Groans of the Trustees."

The income of the fund in the year 1830 is less than in 1829 by £287 10s 11d, and in 1828 by £518 8s 2d; in 1828 the income was £5215 0s 2d, in 1822 £4984 2s 11d, in 1830 £4696 12s. Some few circuits (among which are Liverpool North and South) have increased their contributions, but the instances are so few, and of such an inconsiderable amount, that we find it gravely announced, in the lofty style of the Rev. John Gaultier, that, "At a meeting of the trustees of the Brompton chapel, they agreed to give this year at the rate of 20 per cent more than the sum voted last year," (that is, £6 6s, instead of £5 5s.) We are then told that this mighty and meritorious increase of 20 per cent, (that is twenty-one shillings,) was offered by the trustees, and not suggested by the preachers.

The committee having forestalled the produce of the fund, by contracting, three years since, a loan of £5000, and last year £5000 more, found themselves (after repaying a third instalment of £1000 on the first loan, and a first instalment of £1000 on the second loan, with interest on both loans) in possession of a considerable sum, which was applied as follows:—"Grants to the amount of £1872 1s "were then made towards deficiencies of interest, to the "trustees of embarrassed chapels; the particulars of which "will be seen, page 41 to 46 of this Report." Grants in liquidation of principal to the amount of £5665 were also made, the trustees and their friends, also raising £10,165; thus extinguishing debts on thirty-four chapels, to the amount of £15,834." Annexed we furnish an abstract from the Report of the principal features in the case of each chapel relieved.

## STATEMENT OF CHAPELS RELIEVED.

Chapels.	Circuits.	When built.	Cost.	Debt when relieved.	Relief from Chapel Fund.	Trustees &c.	Total.	Actual state of Seat Rents.	Memb. of society connected with Chapels.	Miscellaneous Remarks.
1 Holywell .....	N. Wales, (district).....	1809	£850	£814	£150	£300	£450	well let {	crowded with hearers	{ relieved by fund 9 years successively, to total amount of 63 <i>l</i> 5 <i>s</i>
2 Hessle .....	Hull.....	1813	621	555	70	200	270 {	most discouraging	society poor	total annual reliefs 75 <i>l</i> 1 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>
3 Preston .....	Patrington.....	1812	515	437	70	150	220 {	dreadfully embarrassed	not stated	ditto 78 <i>l</i> 15 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>
4 Hornsea.....	Ditto .....	1814	600	456	50	100	150 {	growing worse & worse	ditto	ditto 52 <i>l</i> 7 <i>s</i>
5 Royton .....	Oldham .....	1804	660	610	100	210	310	about £15 <i>P</i> ann.	ditto	{ relief for 8 years towards interest 50 <i>l</i> 4 <i>s</i>
6 Measham .....	Ashby-de-la-Zouch {	1798 {	307 & enlarged	601 16 5	50	100	150 {	def. of int. above £6 per ann.	30 members	trade much declined
7 Bilsborough ...	Garstang .....	1814	150	309	60	120	180 {	rents & collection £3 per annum	12 members	.....
8 Rawcliffe .....	Snaith .....	1815	800	700	40	100	140 {	1-5th less than yearly interest	not stated	total relief for 7 years 55 <i>l</i> 8 <i>s</i>
9 Robertsbridge..	Sandhurst .....	1813	400	444	70	197	267	not stated	ditto	{ 9 former grants towards interest 39 <i>l</i> 5 <i>s</i>
10 Newington ...	Sheerness.....	1816	574 14 5	612 8 1	100	200	300	seat & oth. rents, subscription & collection, £15 10 <i>s</i> <i>P</i> annum	ditto	grants for 8 successive years 63 <i>l</i> 7 <i>s</i>
11 Wing.....	Near Leighton Buzzard {	1814	750	about 800	175	350	525	annual def. £16	extremely poor	{ a most distressed village chapel
12 Blaby.....	Leicester {	bought 1810	300	350	80	120	200	now easy	17 members	.....
13 Kingsley .....	Leek .....	1811	210	200	50	100	150 {	def. of int. £4 7 <i>s</i> per annum	society small and poor	{ when the chapel was opened 61 <i>l</i> was collected & subscribed
14 Brunswick .....	Liverpool.....	1811	10,956	12,708	1000	3000	4000	not stated	not stated	{ the report calls the offer of the trustees a noble offer
15 Seddlescombe ..	Sandhurst .....	1812	not stated	145	25	50	75	ditto	ditto	.....
16 Middlesex .....	Hackney-road {	1811 {	900 & additions	1300	150	250	400	ditto	ditto	{ held on a lease, to expire in 26 years
17 Barton .....	Wellingborough	1804	336	400	75	225	300 {	rents £1, collection 5 <i>s</i> per annum, considerable deficiency	16 members	.....
18 High-street ...	Lane End .....	1813	913	950	130	270	400 {	def. £10 <i>P</i> ann.	72 members	.....
19 Sand-Hutton...	Thirsk .....	1815	728	590	100	200	300	sittings 3 <i>d</i> to 9 <i>d</i> per quarter	16 members	.....
20 Newby Wiske..	Thirsk .....	1814	638	526	80	120	200 {	seat rents £2 per annum	18 members	{ relieved by fund 8 years, to the amount of 29 <i>l</i> 13 <i>s</i> , towards interest
21 Carno.....	Llanidloes .....	1814	192	288	70	131	201 {	.....	30 members	.....
22 Pendock .....	Ledbury .....	1823	451 12	482	100	100	200	not stated	not stated	{ this chapel built with the consent of the Chapel Building Committee
23 Calvert-street..	Norwich .....	1810	5000		300	600	900	£150 per annum	600 members	ann. deficiency still about 40 <i>l</i>
24 Turn .....	Plymouth .....	1817	327 10	405 13	50	100	150	not stated	9 members	.....
25 Tideswell .....	Bradwell .....	1810	209	270	50	100	150	ditto	12 poor memb.	.....
26 Dolgelly.....	.....	1807	above 1100	about 1000	130	250	380	ditto	nearly 100 members	{ on the fund 11 years, having received 233 <i>l</i> 18 <i>s</i> towards interest
27 Marlborough...	Hungerford .....	1811	625	500	50	100	150 {	considerable deficiency	33 members	{ the trustees of this chapel lately "had to exert themselves in three similar cases"
28 Brightholmlee ..	Sheffield .....	1807	484	300	50	130	180	£5 per annum	13 members	.....
29 Kingsclere.....	.....	1809	300	312	40	92	132	£7 17 <i>s</i> <i>P</i> annum	16 members	.....
30 Shepton Mallet .....	.....	1818	3030	2370	200	400	600	sittings 6 <i>d</i> to 18 <i>d</i> <i>P</i> qr.; def. £20 8 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i> last year	140 poor members	{ this chapel came on the fund last year—held on a lease of lives
31 Warwick .....	Coventry .....	1824	1400	1443	300	100	400	seat & house rents collec. subscrip. &c. £40 <i>P</i> ann.	trustees very poor	premises not worth 750 <i>l</i> , &c. as per report
32 Canterbury .....	Canterbury .....	1811	8387	6721	700	700	1400	income £160 per annum	.....	{ 11 grants, amounting to 778 <i>l</i> 0 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i> , have been made from fund towards interest
33 Worcester .....	Worcester .....	.....	upwards 8000	5436	700	550	1250	.....	.....	{ this chapel received 300 <i>l</i> from the fund in 1825, beside 11 annual grants towards the interest, amount. to 778 <i>l</i> 8 <i>s</i>
34 Frome .....	Frome .....	1811	4351	3000	300	300	600	£72 4 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	.....	.....

We have thus endeavoured to lay before our readers a comprehensive statement of the cases of distressed chapels relieved by the fund. But since our table gives a comprehensive view, it is necessarily faint when contrasted with the lengthened details of the Report. We think, however, that it amply justifies us in calling the Report a *tale of extravagance*. It furnishes evidence that the trustees who built these chapels, and the preachers who urged them on, have been guilty of profuse and reckless expenditure. Look at the case of Canterbury and Worcester chapels, costing each of them above £8000, and only yielding about £160 per annum each. These two chapels have received from the general chapel fund the sum total of £3256 8s 6d, with liberty to apply for further grants of money. We suppose the Methodist public think that they are promoting the cause of God when they give their money to the chapel fund: but they do not surely imagine that it is doing God service to subscribe their property, in order that a few people at Canterbury or Worcester may gratify their taste by erecting large and ornamental chapels, and that a few preachers may have suitable pulpits wherein to display their great talents. The greater number of the chapels in our list have been built since 1811, and manifestly either without necessity or without calculation. Thus we find chapels cost in building £700, £600, £400, or £300 per annum, whose seats rents amount only to £10, £6, £3, and even only £1 per annum. A kind of chapel-crusade seems to have been advocated by the preachers about the years 1811 to 1818, and eagerly embraced by those whom they term their "principal friends in every circuit." The consequence of this *chapel-building mania* has been a terrible re-action, which they, in their simplicity, never dreamt of. Our table says nothing of the sufferings of these simple men, but let our readers refer to the Report itself, and they will find that it *teems* with the literal *groans of the trustees*. The Conference, we are certain, have had a great share in stimulating this unhealthy action in the societies, but they are not the sufferers;—they, indeed, have gained, whilst the trustees have often paid the price of their folly with their comfort, peace and liberty. Thus we find in the Report, the trustees saying, in one place, "Mr. Stilder, a trustee, consents to *resign* £125;" in another place, "we foresee nothing but *ruin to our surviving brethren*;" again, we find a gentleman, John Warren, Esq., saying, "What it wants of the £350 I must myself make up, which will be a heavy sum for me to advance, added to the repairs of the chapel, which will leave me, I am afraid, little short of £300; but I would rather do it at once, than go on in our present state." Further on we read, "The trustees also think it proper to state, that several of them are trustees for *other distressed chapels* in the neighbourhood;" again, "Several of us had no personal concern with the erection of this chapel, but became trustees solely for the benefit of the good cause, at the request of the preachers, without the least idea of being brought into any embarrassment. Again, "and one, on whom the responsibility of late has principally devolved, has contributed to the chapels in this city upwards of £500." Again, in another place, the trustees, speaking of the consequence of a sale of their trust premise thus, "were this to take place, it would reduce us and our families to immediate starvation."

These are a few of the doleful expressions with which the Report abounds, yet we are told that "the contributors to the fund, whether by private subscriptions or at the annual public collection in its behalf; whether they peruse at-

"tentively the yearly Report, or only listen to the brief statements made from the pulpit, may rest assured that they "hear *very little indeed*, in comparison of what the committee are painfully compelled to hear regularly, in their annual session. The feelings of the gentlemen who have been members of it, have, for some years past, been harrowed up by the distressing disclosures and the heart-moving appeals to which they have there listened, and the appalling prospects of ruin to many chapel trusts, there presented to their view, without the means of prevention or cure being at their disposal." As some proof of this the Report also states, that "no less than thirty-seven offers, amounting to £6049, which the committee had no means of meeting, were made this year." Viewing this fact in connection with others, viz:—1st, that £1872 1s were last year granted towards the annual deficiencies of interest on various chapels. 2ndly, that a sum of £6000 or £7000 is wanted for the immediate relief of the Scotch chapels, of which only £1392 13s 9d had been collected up to last July. 3rdly, that the income of the fund is rapidly declining, and 4thly, that its produce has already been anticipated to the amount of about £7200, we think no person will hesitate to believe that the prospect to the trustees and to the Conference is appalling. Yet this same Conference which has long had this ruinous prospect transferred from the circuit schedules, to their own general register, (for the state of all their chapels is known to the Conference;) will it be believed that this body dared to erect that strange tribunal at Leeds, and year after year dared not only to confirm their act, but to promulgate their iniquitous proceedings as the law of the societies. Still more unnaturally the conference passed laws in 1823 respecting the application of the chapel fund as follows:—

"1. That in future, after a rigorous examination of all the cases proposed to the committee for relief, the sum of £3000 ONLY, shall be allowed for *annual deficiencies*."

"2nd. That all the money collected above that sum, to the amount of £1000 (!!!) shall be appropriated to the reduction of *principal*; but subject to such terms and conditions as the committee may deem most advisable."

"3rd. That when the annual collections and subscriptions for this fund shall amount to considerably more than £4000, that the surplus shall be employed in *grants* to aid the building of *NEW CHAPELS*, in the most promising places, in different parts of the kingdom, under such regulations as the general committee shall deem reasonable and practicable."—*Minutes of Conference, 1823.*

In consonance with these resolutions of the Conference the committee state in their Report, that "the rule allowing only £1000 of the proceeds of the chapel fund to be appropriated to this object, (*i. e. liquidation of principal*) has been regarded as far as possible; the surplus for the two years being only £250, as will be seen by reference to both year's Reports." It is abundantly manifest from these facts that the Conference in comparison with their own power, would sacrifice even the trustees themselves. They are willing to keep the trustees in humble submission by making annual grants for payment of interest, but there must be no material reduction of principal debt, because that would render the trustees independent. A generous and willing people have overloaded themselves with debt, almost beyond endurance, and now when they are contributing to help one another the Conference steps forward and says "this money which you have contributed for your own relief is under our direction and control, and we will not suffer you to apply more than £1000 per annum to the reduction

"of your principal debts, and £3000 per annum towards the payment of interest: any surplus shall be applied to the building of new chapels for us. We know you may be arrested, beggared, bankrupt; you may give all your property to your trusts, but what is that to us!!"

In the Methodist Magazine for March, there is a copy of a letter addressed to Messrs. Marriott and Naylor, the treasurers of the chapel fund, by some person who signs W. P. at Launceston. This gentleman states that having lately had a paper put into his hands containing observations on the chapel fund, extracted from the Circular (they may be found in the 10th number, article "Church Government") his *impressions*, on reading them were, that they were "written with the intention of misrepresenting the proceedings of the Conference, and of injuring the general chapel fund," and that "a persuasion of this, and a hope that others will do the same as himself, induced him to send a donation of £5." He also states that he has from its commencement carefully noticed the application of the fund, and has been always much pleased with the very *impartial* and *equitable* manner in which its funds have been distributed. He further says he is a trustee for several Conference chapels, only one of which has ever received any benefit from the fund. In order to give his argument direction to its object, he subjoins to his letter a "P.S. you may make what use you please of this letter." The use which "Marriott & Naylor" have made of the letter is that which the writer plainly intended, viz. to parry the observations of the Circular. This however is a very unscientific method of fence, and betrays great weakness. The article which they thus feebly attempt to overthrow is too well founded to be overturned by the sidewind of any gentleman's *impressions*. That statement is grounded on facts—stubborn facts, and laughs to scorn the base attempts of insinuation. Let W. P. restrain his "*impressions*," and plead to the facts of the case, and when he has given them even a plausible explanation, we will request the writer of that unanswerable argument to re-consider his statements. The method of W. P. and his friends the treasurers of the chapel fund, resembles very closely the conduct of great potentates, who declare that they are strongly impressed with the goodness of their cause, and advance with 100,000 bayonets in justification of it. This letter seems to be put forward as a kind of "*follow the leader*" cry, which they sanguinely hope may become epidemical, and overwhelm the voice of truth. If however there be any value in this species of weapon, the greater is the amount of money, so much better will be the result, and W. P. should, therefore, before he thus cried "*follow the leader!*" have put forward a leader more conspicuous and substantial. A sum of £100 might perhaps have verified his *impressions*, whereas £5 will hardly convince mankind of the sincerity of a trustee who has been relieved *once*, and may happen to be relieved *twice* by the chapel fund. With regard to the "*impartial* and *equitable*" application of the chapel fund, proofs from their own documents may be drawn to the contrary.

Having had our attention directed by the above mentioned letter to the article on the chapel fund in our 10th number, we are agreeably surprised to find that we have often unwittingly been led to similar conclusions. This is the more pleasing since the facts from which our inferences are drawn, were not published when the comprehensive views contained in the above named article were printed in the Circular.

(To be concluded in our next, in which we shall develop our Plan for the Relief of the Trustees.)

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN.—It has been observed, that the zeal which reflects true glory on the cause of Christ, is inspired and governed by the invincible energies of his truth. If the character and tendency of your publication afford monthly illustration of this position, as I trust it will, it becomes then the duty, the bounden duty, of Christians, and especially of Methodist Christians, to aid your endeavours to expose what is wrong and unconstitutional in the acts of Methodist preachers, whether assembled at Conference, or in special district meetings. It is evident that, as the faithful advocates of truth, you are disposed, at any expense, and determined against all discouragement, to disseminate its principles, exhibit its beauties, and secure its success; I, therefore, cannot find fault with the note which you appended to my last epistle, wherein you state, that "the object of the *Circular* is not to censure the constitution of 1797, but to cause it, such as it is, to be respected."

With all respect, gentlemen, for your discrimination, I did not attack the securities of the constitution of 1797; I merely brought to the view of your numerous readers the fact, unless I am misinformed, that the said constitution was not lawfully begotten; and hence, that there is too much reason to infer that its laxity of expression would not have afforded such convenient outlets for ministerial defection in discipline, had the Methodist societies been properly and openly represented at that important era. Let this point be waived for the present, that I may express my concurrence in your note at page 23, of No. 3, that "if the spirit of this covenant be acted upon as previously to Dec. 1827, then the delegates assembled in 1795 and 1797 shall have performed good service; but if not, they had better have remained at home, since the shackles of the church are, under the appearance of freedom, only more firmly riveted."

This is the subject to which I wish to call your attention. It is only the "*appearance of freedom*." Have we not witnessed the truths of this assertion under the *apparently* mild and tolerant government of Mr. John Scott, the late superintendent of the Liverpool North Circuit? Are not the cases of Mr. Rawlins, Mr. Russell, and a host of others, sufficient to convince us of this fact? Does not the Leeds affair show the total insufficiency of that covenant? Why do the people, the Methodist people, submit to this intolerance? Why do they suffer the preachers to live on their means, while they trample on their Christian liberty? The people "*yet submit*." They have submitted hitherto, not because they do not feel their degradation; not because they are not sensible that their immunities are annually diminishing, but because they have not summoned proper courage, (through some channel such as the *Circular*) and united as one man, to claim their rights and privileges from those men whom they have educated, exalted and maintained all their lives. How may such a measure—such a sweeping measure of reform be carried into effect, without endangering the Methodist fabric and interfering with the enlargement of Christ's kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel, agreeably to our doctrines? The answer is as plain as the way is clear and practicable: Let every society meet by delegates, first in districts, and afterwards when Conference meets, and declare that they must have "the constitution, the whole constitution, and nothing but the constitution," or that they will withhold their pounds, shillings and pence from any further misapplication by their ministers. This would do the work effectually.

This would bring our ecclesiastical rulers to their right mind, and cause them to move in their right orbits. It must be admitted, by the most patient and forbearing member among us, that almost ever since Mr. Wesley's decease, and particularly since the covenant and security of 1797 have lulled us into confidence, have induced us to say "peace and safety;" when, in fact, under the "appearance of freedom," our shackles have been more firmly riveted. And the worst of it is, that which makes it more mortifying to our feelings, all this departure from Scripture and Methodist rule,—all this invasion of our rights, whether in privileges or chapel property, has been effected at *our expense*, and at *OUR EXPENSE ONLY!* I have just hinted that, by our apathy, we have not only winked at, but almost encouraged, many of our preachers to move out of their proper spheres. Many of them speculate largely in the funds, in joint stock companies, and in other matters, (which I may probably notice more fully at a future period) which have marred their usefulness, cankered their minds, and placed them on an eminence to which a poor man dare scarcely come near to ask spiritual or temporal counsel, without being made to feel that he is approaching an "order" very superior to himself. Ought these things to be after this manner? Is this original Methodism?

Is this according to the spirit of the constitution of 1797?

I am old enough to remember the words and maxims of some of our holy and laborious preachers of the last century. One sentence shall suffice for the present. "I am come to preach Christ among you brethren—my business, my only business, is to preach the Gospel; do *you*, therefore, look after the temporal affairs of the society." Is such phraseology employed in our times? Will this apply to Leeds—Liverpool—London? I think not. Perhaps nothing has checked the progress of the glorious doctrines of Methodism so much as its ministers becoming secular, and associating *too much* with the rich and great, and *too little* with the pious poor. How often have many of us been grieved to see our spiritual teachers the companions, patrons and defenders of certain members, whose chief recommendation is their wealth.

The following will help to illustrate this tendency in our preachers to grasp at worldly profit and worldly government. It will be in the recollection of many of our readers, both in this town and elsewhere, that about seven or eight years since, it was in contemplation to establish an Insurance Company for the purpose of protecting property, &c.; that this society was to emanate from this town, Manchester and Leeds; that one of its objects was to effect an insurance on all Methodist chapels, schools, &c. without any profit whatever to the company. Subscriptions were entered into, I believe, to defray the expenses of an agent who visited Yorkshire and London on its behalf. At the latter place, as well as in other towns, the preachers were, of course, consulted. The scheme was hailed as one likely to promote the temporal interest of Methodism. All went on smoothly for a time: but unfortunately the Liverpool agent, at one of the meetings held in London, happened to let slip, that "one of the rules forbade any travelling Methodist preacher holding office and directing its affairs;" they might hold shares, but were not allowed to engage in its government. It was thought by the framers of the outline of the laws of the society, that this very clause would have ensured cordial reception with our spiritual guides—men whose avocations ought to be in an affair which is not of this world. But the simple minded legislators at Bank-buildings com-

mitted a dreadful mistake, (a mistake, I am told, which was not forgiven for many years, if at all,) by making this provision. "What!" said Mr. B., at one of the meetings, "are you going to exclude YOUR PREACHERS from GOVERNING?—are we to be marked men? No, no, we will never join you on, nor submit to, such terms." Much more was said, but for the present I forbear; take the above as a specimen of ministerial placidity and disinterestedness!

I shall merely add that, besides the above cited death-blow to the society, there was quite a scramble between a supernumerary travelling preacher in London and a layman, for the London agency. So high was this dispute and party spirit carried on, that there was actually a division and opposition of interest in a business which was not carried into effect. It is hardly necessary to add that, when the Liverpool agent returned from London, (with a face pretty much lengthened, *because the fear of Mr. B. was still before his eyes*,) to report progress, the provisional committee became sensible of its unpardonable mistake; but it was too late to retract. The committee therefore paid all expenses, gave up the affair, and retired in disgust.

This subject, gentlemen, is of great importance, as it respects not only the conduct of ministers and hearers, but also the discipline of the church of Christ. As worldly-minded men prefer associating with those whose dispositions are most congenial with their own, so ought heavenly-minded men to prefer the company of those whose lives and conversation evince their love to God and man. I cannot help quoting on this occasion, the applicable observation of the spiritual-minded Matthew Henry, the commentator. He observes, that "the office of a minister is "so dignified, and of so much moment, that he should in "all things be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity and sincerity: and when he "speaks, he should speak agreeably to the oracles of God, "and not seek to please men: nor should he be deceived "with vain words, lest offence should be given, and the "ministry thereby be blamed. Ministers and hearers are "alike exhorted to put on the whole armour of God, that "they may be able to stand against the wiles of the "devil—to have no fellowship with the unfruitful workers "of darkness, but rather reprove them: to take care not "to set too high a value on the opinions of men, lest they "should be deceived with a lying tongue, and a flattering "mouth which worketh ruin." This is Scripture. Will the present administration of Methodism bear being brought to this test? Tell me, ye worthy men and brethren, leaders, trustees and private members at Leeds, Sheffield, London, Liverpool, and other places, who know the price of ministerial wrath, whether a departure from these salutary rules has not been the real cause of all your persecution, as well as the cause of the unfruitfulness and non-increase of our societies?

I do not aim at the office of censorship; I am aware that, to reprehend *properly* is the most difficult, as well as the most needful office of true friendship; for who is it that will not sometimes merit reproof? Who among our preachers can endure it? Yet how can a friend and brother give greater proof of his regard than in preventing danger before its birth; or in bringing a man to safety, who is pursuing the wrong road? If I am not greatly mistaken, this is the object of your publication. I have experienced your candour: for while I have expressed my dissent from some of your opinions, you allow me your columns to express mine. Wishing that your succeeding numbers may be the means of combating error and promoting the interest of truth, I remain, gentlemen,

Very truly your's,

Liverpool, February, 1831.

CYRUS.

## REMARKS ON A MINUTE OF CONFERENCE, &amp;c.

BY DANIEL ISAAC.

(Concluded from our last number.)

Had there been any charges against *me*, I must have been heard in my own defence; but by distinguishing between me and my book, acquitting *me* and accusing *it*, my presence was not necessary. No one acquainted with Messrs. Bunting and Co. and with their manner of doing business in Conference, can accuse them of adopting the distinction as a colourable pretence for denying me the privilege of defending myself. But though they no doubt very conscientiously made the distinction, and therefore very probably inferred, that there was no *necessity* for my being present, yet they might at least have given me an opportunity, by apprizing me of their intentions. If they did not think it *necessary to keep me away*, why did they *oppose* the motion of my friends that I should be sent for? A preacher who wrote me a day or two after the debate, remarks—"It was urged several times that you should be sent for; but I observed the president and secretary, and those about them, always objected to that, saying, the business might be settled without you." Allowing the business might be settled *without me*; were Messrs. Reece, Bunting, &c. afraid that the business could not be settled *with me*? If not, why should they oppose the wish of my friends? The reason why my friends were so pressing for my presence was, they were sure that had I been permitted to explain myself upon two or three points on which uncommon stress was laid, I should have given full satisfaction to the Conference, and thus all censure of my book, as well as of myself would have been avoided. It looks rather odd, to say no more, that Messrs. Bunting and Reece should so highly esteem and respect their brother Isaac, as they professed to do, and yet so pertinaciously refuse him all opportunity of explaining his sentiments to his brethren; for the preacher says, it was *urged and urged several times*; but all to no purpose,—the president and secretary *always* objected to it. My affectionate brethren, it seems, loved me, just as we love many things,—the best farthest off. My presence would probably have extinguished their benevolent feelings!

I will state the reasons why I think, as many others have thought, that had I been at Conference, the resolution would not have passed. All the preachers with whom I have conversed upon the subject, are agreed that the book was condemned on account of its supposed heterodoxy respecting a call to the ministry, and its disloyal tendency; for as to Mr. Bunting's qualms of conscience, which would not suffer him to read my sin and blasphemy, the effect was spoiled by the imprudence of Mr. Benson; and the insinuation that I was a disciple of Voltaire was too gross to obtain credit.

On the subject of a *call to the ministry*, it was taken for granted that I denied the *immediate* influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind of a person designated by the Almighty to the sacred office. Nothing could be more false. I have contended strongly in the last essay, that no man can be qualified for the ministry without the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; that the duty to preach arises from the qualifications which the Spirit has conferred; that "the convictions of duty may be powerfully impressed upon the mind by the Holy Spirit;" and that the success of the ministry depends upon the same Divine influence accompanying the word to the conscience of the hearers. Not a line, however, of what I had written upon these points was read in Conference. Instead of exhibiting my sentiments fairly, I was compared to Messrs. Robinson and Cook, who denied the direct influence of God upon the heart altogether. Mr. Bunting and his friends might as well have compared me to Herod and Pontius Pilate. I not only admit, but contend, that it is by a *direct and powerful* influence of God on the heart, that a person is qualified for the ministry, is prompted to enter on the work, and is successful in it.

But I had exposed the hypocrisy of some, and the fanaticism of others, who pretend, that by a special divine impulse a man is authorised and required to preach the gospel, let his abilities and qualifications be what they may. My real sentiments were withheld from the Conference; what I said on the danger of trusting to impulses alone, was misconstrued; no wonder therefore that I was made a heretic. I merely controverted the notion that *impulse* is the *rule of duty*. If any preacher thinks that we are blindly to follow impulses, I wish he would try to answer my arguments; the subject would certainly afford him sufficient scope for the exercise of his ingenuity.

Dr. Clarke and others, I understand, maintain, that the work of the ministry is *extraordinary work*; and that consequently, every one who engages in it should have an *extraordinary call*. I believe so too; and have no objection to denominate both the work and the call *miraculous*. Will any one attempt a proof, on this ground, that all who are qualified for the ministry are not called to it?—Was it not important to settle this business *without* brother Isaac! How would it have been settled had he been present to have explained his sentiments fully to his brethren?

But what, I believe, contributed most to the condemnation of the book, was the suspicion that it might give offence to government. The only place where I have spoken at all on the subject of government is in the preface, and I think very respectfully.—I am sure they were intended to be so. I shall perhaps be told that none of the brethren charged me with disloyalty. I answer. What business then have government with the book? Our laws allow liberty of conscience, and I have a right to presume, that I may defend that liberty without giving any just cause for offence. Are we to go and ask ministers of state whether we are to discuss theological questions? if I wished to libel government, I would say, yes.

The fact however, is, that an *impression* was made upon Conference unfavourable to my loyal principles. It was warmly contended that the book must be publicly reprobated to satisfy the government of the loyalty of Methodist preachers. There could be no occasion for Conference to demonstrate their loyalty in this way, if the book contained no sentiment unfriendly to our civil rulers; and there could have been no occasion for my friends in the stationing committee to defend me "from all charge of *disloyalty* to king, lords, and commons," if no charges of that sort had been preferred against me. The truth is, my opposers dare not accuse me directly of this crime; for then they must have allowed me to appear in Conference to rebut it, and this would have ruined their project. They therefore contented themselves with representing the political tendency the book had had; and dropped very intelligible hints to my discredit. Many prosperous voyages have been made with a *side wind*.

I demand of my accusers what proofs they can exhibit of their loyalty, beyond professions to a prime minister, prayers in a chapel, and toasting church and king over a glass of wine? I hope the following evidence in my favour will be deemed somewhat more substantial. About six years ago, the colliers in the north entered into secret associations, similar to those of the Luddites. They designated their society, *The Brotherhood*, and initiated the members by administering to them an oath of secrecy, which was done over the Bible with a drawn sword upon it. I was stationed at that time in the Shields circuit. As soon as I received information of what was going on, I rode over to Sunderland and concerted measures with the preachers there to put a stop to it. We consulted a gentleman learned in the law, as to the legal nature of the offence, and immediately set to work. I wrote to the preachers in the Newcastle circuit, explained to them our plans, and exhorted them to co-operate with us in suppressing this dangerous conspiracy. We visited all the collieries where we had societies; instructed our members and hearers respecting the evil of a brotherhood, both in a civil and religious point of view; and exhorted those who had taken the oath to abjure it, and the others to keep clear of it. Many immediately abjured, and disowned the fraternity; and the secret charm which had held them together was thus dissolved. After some had withdrawn from a principle of conscience, others returned to their duty lest they should be informed against, and order was soon restored.

The preachers who at that time travelled in that neighbourhood will bear me witness that I took the most active part in this unpleasant affair. It may be readily imagined that I ran considerable personal risk. The sons of violence knew I was their principal enemy, and often vowed revenge. At one place in particular, when I went to preach, the friends were alarmed when they saw me. They said that many of the men had protested, if I came there that evening, they would pull the chapel down. At the appointed hour we went to the meeting; it was crowded to excess; but God turned the lions into lambs; I went through the service without interruption, and they quietly withdrew. Another night soon after this, I was returning home after preaching at a colliery, I was attacked by two men armed with bludgeons, who endeavoured to knock me down; but being provided with a good stick I fought my way past them, took to my heels, and by the good providence of God escaped out of their hands. Whether these were pitmen or not it is impossible to say; but admitting they were not, it cannot be doubted that I exposed myself to much danger, by incensing so violent a body of men against me.

Mr. Bunting travelled two years in the Halifax circuit, during a period that General Ludd triumphed in that neighbourhood. I believe he bore a public testimony against this bold conspirator, and made himself rather unpopular for so doing. But what did he effect? General Ludd was not frightened away with his fine speeches; but maintained his ground, in spite of the philippics of this mighty Demosthenes. To be sure I did not do much in the way of oratory; but I had the merit of *combining*, and giving an *impulse* to, the energies of my brethren, which succeeded in annihilating the *brotherhood*. Compare the danger in the two cases. I believe the members of the *brotherhood* were as numerous as the Luddites; but who would not rather encounter an army of enervated weavers than a handful of sturdy colliers? After having

voluntarily hazarded my life, without fee or reward, in the service of my sovereign and my country, I am to be held up as a suspicious character, to my brethren and to government, by a man, who in a situation not half so perilous, did not effect a tenth part so much towards the restoration of social order! Go, Sir, to court with your resolution in your hand, bow and scrape to a prime minister, shew him your precious document, and gabble about loyalty! When, Sir, "in the fear of God," you have executed this mission, I will follow you, and present this paper. I hope I can shew as loyal a face as my neighbours. Let the preacher who has done and suffered more in this cause than myself, cast the first stone at me. The preachers are remarkable for their attachment to government, and what was said on the subject of loyalty contributed more to the condemnation of the book than all the other objections to it put together. Mr. Bunting knew the feelings of the brethren upon this point, and I will do him the justice to say, he played upon them admirably. "Towards the close of the conversation," says a preacher, "Mr. Bunting urged the necessity of the resolution on political grounds." An orator should always close with something impressive! O how necessary it was to settle the business *without me*!!

I sincerely believe in my conscience, that my book was not condemned on account of its hostility to the church. For 1, It would be easy if I had room, to give extracts from the works of Messrs. Wesley and Benson, which are much more severe than any thing I have written. 2, Simpson's Plea, and Neal's Puritans, are frequently advertised on the cover of our magazine; and are put into the catalogue of books on sale at the Conference office. I should be glad to know how that man has disposed of his modesty who can affirm, that my book is any thing like equal to these works in opposition to the church and clergy. These two authors have done more towards confirming me in the principles of dissent than all the other books I have read, and they have had a similar effect on the minds of many of our people. It is scarcely possible for a man to read these works and keep his temper towards the church. I hope the Conference will not allow me or any one to say, that they will gladly facilitate the sale of books written against the church, except those published by members of their own body; because this would suppose that notwithstanding their professions of attachment to the church they really wish her downfall, and permit her enemies to plant their batteries on methodistical ground, as affording a favourable point of attack, but from principles of policy enjoin neutrality on their own subjects. In fact, I do not believe that the *chief* reason which inspired the hatred of Mr. Bunting and a few others to my book has ever yet been publicly avowed. It is not always prudent to speak the *whole* truth.

The resolution was moved by Mr. Entwistle. I entertain a very high opinion of this gentleman's piety and honesty, and therefore cannot but regret that he should have felt it a duty to appear so conspicuously against me. I am certain such men as Mr. E. could not believe what was said respecting my sin, blasphemy, &c. and yet, on the ground of distinction suppose me guiltless. How then could he move the resolution before I had been heard in Conference? Could he seriously believe it right "in the fear of God" to strike at the reputation of an absent person? If such men as Mr. E. can look at the resolution and profess their conviction that my character is not implicated in it, I will frankly confess that, after having travelled nearly twenty years in the connexion, I have still to learn what manner of men they are. If Mr. E. should assure me, as I believe he would, that he really does not think any evil of me; yet still I appeal to him, whether he can possibly suppose that the thousands who read the resolution and have no personal knowledge of me, will not form ideas of me much to my prejudice. No one will be surprised that Mr. Bunting should forget to state, in drawing up the resolution, that the brethren regarded me with "esteem and affection"; but it is singular the omission should escape the notice of Mr. E. Has he forgotten that his relative and patron, the late Mr. Pawson, published a book which contained "various passages" of an exceptionable nature. There is much difference I allow between Mr. Pawson's case and mine; but that difference is all in my favour. Some writers had actually published to the world before the affair was considered in Conference, that Mr. Pawson had recommended the murder of all wicked priests. I have seen the passages, and am certain that without much straining such a construction might be put upon them; at the same time I am quite sure that Mr. Pawson had no intention to convey such an idea. No person has yet put any thing near so bad a construction upon any part of my book; and though the Conference supposed that government might be offended with it, no one ever dreamed that I recommended murder, while pleading hard against persecution. The worst that the book committee could find against my book, amounted only, to use the words of their secretary, to "a few levities and sarcasms upon the clergy." Now this was not quite so horrible as urging that they should be murdered. In the case of Mr. P. what did the Conference do? They allow that he used some "unguarded expressions;" but

instead of passing any censure, their minute contains a laboured apology. They call him their "venerable friend," allow him to put his *own* construction upon the passages, and affirm that "Mr. P.'s peaceable turn of mind has been so fully manifested to the Conference for 39 years, that they are constrained to believe, that to wish any description of men to be persecuted, was and still is at an infinite distance from his thoughts." There is not a single expression of disapprobation either of Mr. P. or any part of his book. Had any preacher had any *private feelings* to gratify on this occasion, how he might have boggled and sickened at the murderous expressions; how eloquently he might have declaimed on their political tendency, and urged that some writers had sounded the alarm that methodist preachers were stimulating their followers to kill all the regular clergy; that government would get hold of it, and that the connexion would be in danger of losing all their privileges!

Mr. Pawson was allowed to explain himself to the Conference. Why was that liberty denied me? The sentiments of respect which the preachers bore towards Mr. P. were strongly expressed in the resolution. If the profession of the same sentiments in my case were sincere, why not publish them to the world. I dare say Mr. Bunting could explain these points.

I believe there is not another instance in the annals of Methodism of a preacher (I ought to have said a preacher's *book*!) being thus publicly reprimanded by his brethren without their having granted him the liberty of defence or apology. Even Kilham, who had abused the preachers and laws of the body in the most virulent terms, was allowed the privilege of explaining, retracting, &c. and was promised forgiveness on the terms of submission for the future.—Can the popish heretic be named whom the holy fathers have not endeavoured to reclaim?—In the preface I have said enough to exonerate the Conference, by taking all the responsibility upon myself. In case of alarm or offence, could not Mr. Bunting have referred government to this passage in the book, just as well as the minute of Conference? Would it not have been quite soon enough to make a minute against the book, *after* the higher powers had complained of it. To do this beforehand has the appearance (though I do not think there was any design) of *inviting persecution*:—It is like saying to his Majesty's Ministers,—"Gentlemen, we are sorry to inform you that a member of our body has published a book on Ecclesiastical Claims, of which we highly disapprove; and thinking it may probably be offensive to you, we wish to apprise you of our sentiments: you may take what measures you think proper with the author." If the poor miserable heretic is to be thus, uncalled for, delivered over to the secular power, I hope the ceremony will be accompanied with the usual prayer,—that he may be *mercifully* dealt with. Should it come to my knowledge, however, that the resolution is presented to government, *I will take care that government shall also have this my defence*.

Mr. Moore seconded the resolution, and did me the honour to compare me as a writer to Mr. Robert Robinson. In opposition to what he said of this great man, as being ignorant and superficial, I will cite the opinion of Mr. Parsons, in his memoir of Mr. Simpson, who says, he was "a man of extraordinary genius, knowledge, and eloquence." Though Mr. M. urged the distinction as a reason why I ought not to be sent for, he had the audacity to make the most furious attack on my moral character; I am happy, however, to state, that this occasioned murmurs of disapprobation. But I will dismiss this gentleman,—his vile slanders were too unjust to make any impression on the assembly, and are too contemptible to merit lengthened animadversion.

Several others took a part in the debate; but I have not room to notice them particularly. Mr. Benson, I understand, wished the resolution to pass, that the Conference might be beforehand with the Christian Observer and Eclectic Review in condemning the work. If these critics are to be guided by the resolutions of Conference in the opinion they give of methodistical performances, I must prepare myself to meet with something like a second edition of the minute in their reviews. There was a time when Mr. B. did not pay much deference to the judgment of the Christian Observer. Mr. Jonathan Barker gave a long account of a conversation at a district meeting, in which he supposed I delivered some heterodox sentiments on the subject of a call to the ministry. I have lately seen three or four preachers who were present at that meeting, and not one of them has any recollection of such a conversation. I do not mean to insinuate that Mr. B. *invented* the account; but his memory must have failed him as to what I said: I am certain I never expressed the sentiments imputed to me, because I never held them. But why did not Mr. Barker make mention of this till several years had passed over? This sort of conduct reminds me of a fable which, out of respect for Mr. Barker, I will not repeat. What was said by Messrs. Griffith, Stamp, Bardsley, &c. &c. &c. produced no effect, and is therefore undeserving of notice.

No one need wonder now that the book was condemned. The

surprise with me is that the majority was not larger. When it was put to the vote, 119 were for the censure, and 86 against it. Had I been permitted to plead my own cause in the Conference, I am confident I should have had a large majority in my favour. My accusers were just able to "settle the business *without me!*"

I shall perhaps be told that the printed resolution arose out of charges I sent to Conference against the book committee; that I referred the affair to the judgment of Conference, and that, had I thought proper, I might have preferred the charges in person.

The Conference have delivered no opinion at all upon the points I submitted to their judgment. I never doubted that the committee had authority to refuse advertisements sent for the cover of the magazine; and therefore had they rejected the advertisement of my book, I should have preferred no charge against them. But when I enquired of Mr. Blanchard, he wrote me as follows: "Some members of our committee have interdicted your book from appearing on our magazine, yet they all seem to admire the general argument in it. A few levities and sarcasms upon the clergy are what they object to." The rules of the book-room state that the book-steward shall refer a doubtful advertisement to the committee, that "committee shall meet for the transaction of business," and that "every member shall attend, except in case of *absolute incapacity*." We see here how cautious the Conference were, when these rules were made, to prevent our book concern being managed by "some members" of the committee. Nothing less than *absolute incapacity* could excuse the absence of a single member. And to remunerate the members for their loss of time and trouble in attending to this business, they each receive a copy of every work printed at our press. In answer to any inquiry respecting these *some members* who had *interdicted* my book, Mr. B. stated that they were "ALL that were present at the meeting." I then wrote again, referred him to the rules, and desired him to state whether *all that were absent* were kept from the meeting by *absolute incapacity*. I received no *direct* answer to this question; but he replied to my appeal to the rules, by saying,—"The business of the book-room is not now managed upon the *plan* of the rules you refer to." This is sufficiently intelligible. I appeal to the common sense of the reader, whether I ought to have calmly submitted to an interdict, issued by a lawless faction as the act of the committee, and thus likely to injure seriously the reputation of the book. I detailed these particulars in a letter to Conference, and founded upon them these two charges: 1. Against *some members* of the committee, for taking upon themselves, contrary to rule, to *interdict* my book, 2. Against the committee for not managing the book-concern according to the rules of Conference. These were the points I submitted to the judgment of Conference; but upon these points they have delivered no opinion. The resolution says, "That the Conference approve of the conduct of their Book Committee, in having refused to facilitate the circulation of a Book, &c." But the fact I have shewn was, that this refusal was not the act of *the committee*, but only *some members* of it. Upon the second charge the resolution is perfectly silent. Now what occasion was there for me to take a journey of nearly 500 miles to substantiate these charges; I proved them by extracts from Mr. Blanchard's letters, and I sent the originals by a friend, in case the fidelity of the extracts should be disputed. Instead of delivering a judgment on the *charges*, the Conference gave their judgment of the *book*. Had the book been full of treason, "some members" of the committee had no right, in the inquisitorial style to *interdict* it, nor were the committee justified in setting aside the rules. Suppose a man to have really committed murder, *some members* of a jury have no authority to try him, nor has a court legally constituted any right to proceed against him on a *plan contrary to law*. Neither is it true that the opposition my book met with in Conference was owing merely to the charges I sent against the members of the committee; for the interdictors had previously expressed their determination both in the district meeting and in the stationing committee, to bring the subject before that august assembly. I apprized them through the medium of Mr. Blanchard, that I would have their conduct investigated in Conference; and as they had similar intentions towards me, they ought to have been equally frank and manly in their avowal. Instead of this, they sent me a circular complaining of the difficulty of procuring accommodations for the brethren, and requesting as many as could with convenience to stay at home. From the terms of the *interdict*, I had no reason to apprehend that Conference could find much to blame in either me or the book. All the interdictors admired the argument of the book, and objected to nothing but a FEW levities and sarcasms; but in the debate they perceived that it contained blasphemy, heresy, disloyalty, and an unchristian spirit in every page. My appeals to the Conference, it seems, had enlightened their eyes to see into the shocking enormities I had written. These facts serve to shew how far "the fear of God," which they so piously talk about in the minute, really influenced their minds in this busi-

ness. As to my levities and sarcasms, I have only to remark in the words of Sir Thomas Moore,—"Some are so sour, that they can allow no jests, and others are so dull that they can endure nothing that is sharp; and some are as much afraid of any thing that is quick or lively, as a man bit with a mad dog is of water."

I could say much more; but I presume I have said what is sufficient for my own defence, and I have no wish to go farther. I now appeal to the public, whether I ought to have silently submitted to an interdict, issued by a few members of the committee contrary to our laws, which went to blast the reputation of my work? As the Conference did not really intend to implicate *me* in the censure; and as the censure to say the least, *seems* to bear hard upon my moral character, can any one blame me for making it known that they discriminated between the writer and his production, and "entertained no feeling towards him contrary to esteem and affection?" The principal ground on which the book was condemned, was its heterodoxy and disloyal tendency:—and will any man say I ought to sit down in silence under such imputations, when I am conscious that there is not a preacher in the connexion who preaches more on the immediate and direct influence of the spirit on the minds of both people and ministers than myself; and that all my accusers put together have not rendered government half the service which I have done?

Some will perhaps think I had better have waited till next Conference, when the brethren would probably re-consider the affair. It may be proper to inform such people that I sent a protest to the president last Conference, after they had passed the resolution; but he refused to have it read, and assigned as his reason to a friend of mine, that he had consulted several of the preachers upon it, who were all of opinion that, as my character was not concerned, the protest ought not to be read. Thus on the ground of a *miserable quibbling distinction*, which would disgrace the *meanest pettifogger*, I have been denied the privilege of defence and remonstrance in Conference. They have brought me before the tribunal of the public; and I must either plead there or surrender my character. I hope I look as orthodox, loyal and christian, as Mr. Bunting, or any other of the interdictors.

I will conclude with observing, that I think the few preachers who have been in the habit for some years past of playing the courtier, and dancing attendance on ministers of state, might be better employed. Our Lord and his Apostles did nothing of this kind. They thought it enough to display their loyalty by their example and their precepts. I am in possession of some important facts and documents, relating to these *political negotiators* which I shall not now divulge; but if these loyal gentlemen continue their hostility to me while advocating the rights of conscience, I shall be obliged to make disclosures which I believe will occasion them some uneasiness. I will not yield up my reputation nor my freedom without a struggle. I would rather fall with Pompey in the cause of liberty, than be enthroned with Caesar on its ruins.

D. ISAAC.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,—I have always been a friend to liberty, both civil and religious. I have read with pleasure your spirited and valuable publication, and being convinced that it is a medium just such as the Methodist public has long wanted, and that it ought to be read and supported by every member and friend of the connexion, I beg your acceptance of a Sovereign towards its support. Sincerely wishing you success in the great work you have undertaken,

I am Gentlemen, your's affectionately,

Birmingham, 11th March, 1831.

AN OLD METHODIST.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The following communications are received:—*"D."* of Manchester. *"ITHMAH,"* of Leeds, who has our best thanks for his exertions. *"AN OLD METHODIST,"* of Birmingham, shall appear in our next. *"FIDÉLIS,"* of Liverpool. *"A CONSTANT READER,"* also. *"A WESLEYAN,"* both of London. *"ALPHA'S"* promised communication will be acceptable. In our next number we intend giving, for the information of our friends who have kindly afforded this work their pecuniary assistance, a particular statement of the Treasurer's account, &c.; in the mean time, we thankfully acknowledge receipt of further donations, from

Manchester (omitted last month).....	£2 0 0
London .....	8 8 0
Leeds (from sixteen individuals) .....	2 10 0
Birmingham .....	1 0 0
Liverpool South .....	4 0 0
Liverpool North .....	26 10 0

Published the last day of every month by HARDING, 3, Paternoster-row, London, and WALMSLEY, Church-street, Liverpool; to whom Communications for the Editors may be addressed, post paid. (not exceeding) one lib. (about 14s.) in advance. I will be bound to forward to you, on payment of the sum above mentioned, a copy of the Circular, and "PRINTED BY GEORGE SMITH, LIVERPOOL.



# The Circular

TO

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XVI.

30TH APRIL, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

### THE GENERAL CHAPEL FUND.

*(Continued from page 116.)*

In a former article (Circular No. X, page 74) we contented ourselves with exposing the constitution of the Committee of Distribution, as being the mere puppet, tool, and instrument of the Conference, and a main instrument for perpetuating the power of the Conference faction over the circuits and societies. We then promised to take other opportunities of treating of the operation of the Fund. We did not, indeed, expect to be so soon called upon to redeem this promise; nor could we have anticipated that any report, emanating from the Chapel Fund Committee, would furnish us with such ample materials for serious and painful reflection.

When collections for the Chapel Fund are made by appeals from the pulpit, it is usual to hear of the noble disinterestedness of Trustees, in coming forward and making themselves responsible for the erection of Chapels in places where the societies were too poor to provide for themselves a suitable place of worship. Such erections, we are told, were absolutely required; and the faith of the connexion is involved to make good the expense and to indemnify the Trustees. To all this we perfectly agree. This is the true and legitimate ground of appeal; and such cases constitute the proper objects of relief from "The General Chapel Fund."

But we must shut our eyes, or we must read the report of the Committee without the slightest reflection, (that is, we must remain *pure, simple, and confiding* Methodists, such as are termed by the Conference Advocates—"the sound part of our people,") not to perceive that the Chapel Fund is by no means devoted exclusively to cases of the above description. The providing of *suitable* places of worship, for *poor* and *small* societies, would never have involved that mass of debt, and all its consequent train of calamity and disgrace, which now threatens to overwhelm the connexion.

No! no! this class of genuine cases, which every Methodist will admit to be entitled to prompt and effectual relief, are not able, we suspect, to find even an equal standing with those monstrous cases of bloated extravagance and disgusting mismanagement which figure in the Report, and are deemed worthy to absorb nearly all the resources of the Fund. How should the feeble voice of a poor society, struggling with a small annual deficiency of five or ten pounds, after the last penny has been subscribed by its poor members, be heard amongst the clamour of the gentlemen Trustees, who roar out about annual deficiencies of hundreds of pounds, and talk of the bankruptcy of the Connexion? The former, we suspect, are not in many cases deemed of sufficient magnitude to be listened to; the Trustees who have been so silly as to help these poor societies must suffer the loss.

This remark may not be universally applicable, but to our knowledge it is far more so than it ought to be. In the table we presented in our last number, there are several Chapels of small cost, and small societies which have been relieved; but when the line is drawn between prudent and imprudent management, it will be found, that the real and first claimants on the Fund are not prominent, but even of the smaller class—cases like that of Bilsborough, in the Garstang circuit, come in for relief. In this case a Chapel was built for a society of twelve members, which cost only £150. Something was surely collected in the circuit for this Chapel. Its income is stated at £3 per annum: yet, when admitted on the Fund, the debt on the Chapel amounted to £309,—above twice the original cost of the Chapel! Who shall say that such a case was entitled to relief? We might instance still stronger cases.

The Chapel Fund Committee, indeed, say but little about flagrant cases of mismanagement; yet there is no lack of excuses for the embarrassed state of the Chapels:—thus we read of *bad trade, lost manufacturers, declining commerce, distress of the times, &c.* It happens, however, unfortunately for these excuses, that almost all the Chapels in our table *never* did meet their expenses! Two instances of improvidence, as glaring as any in the

whole Report, are the cases of the Pendock Chapel and the Warwick Chapel, built with the consent of the Chapel-building Committee. A gentleman in the neighbourhood having left a legacy of £400 for the purpose of erecting a new Chapel in Pendock, the friends, without waiting to receive the legacy, began the building. "The Trustees, after several applications for the payment of the said legacy, were unexpectedly disappointed of receiving it. An attorney was consulted on the subject, who gave no hopes of ever recovering the same." This is the usual fate of precipitancy, or, according to the vulgar proverb, of "counting your chickens before they are hatched." Of course, the General Chapel Fund furnishes a comfortable resource for all such mistakes. Warwick Chapel, we are told, was built in 1824, and has been already *five* years upon the fund. The sum which the Chapel-building Committee consented should be expended was £600, but the actual cost was £1400. "By circumstances, which no sagacity could foresee," says the report, "the estimated expenditure was considerably more than doubled." Now here, we think, the Committee should have shewn more modesty; and, instead of employing such absolute expressions, might have been content to say, "By circumstances which the *sagacity of a Conference Chapel-building Committee* could not foresee, &c." For what were these extraordinary circumstances? The Trustees say "We borrowed £800 on bond; but, obtaining it through an attorney, the expenses attending it and the Chapel-deed amounted to £50." Alas! for the sagacity of the Committee. "We now commenced building the Chapel upon a plan then specified, which we were told by our builder might be erected for less than £700; but the expense far exceeded this sum, partly owing to the great difficulty we had in securing a good foundation, the stone and workmanship of which cost £124 extra. Through these unexpected losses and expenses, the Trustees were obliged to borrow £600 more; and thus they have the interest of £1400 to meet." That the actual expense should exceed the estimate is, of course, to the sagacity of a Chapel Fund Committee, *most unaccountable!* This case of sagacious management may be further illustrated by a few more extracts. "The amount of subscriptions and donations raised by our friends, previous to our making any purchase of land, was £118 8s 6d; but half this sum was lost through disastrous circumstances." Again. "The cause in Warwick is in its infancy: there is a society of about 40 members, who are extremely poor, and very few persons besides attend; the consequence has been, the pews have not been let." Again. "If the whole of the premises were sold, they would not, it is calculated, raise more than £750." "The Trustees had no means of helping themselves." "This petition has the signature of such of the Trustees as are able to write, and others have added their *marks*." The circumstance which crowns the *sagacity* of the Committee thus appears to be, that men who were so poor that they were utterly irresponsible, were made Trustees for £1400!

Among the Chapels which have been relieved by the Chapel Fund, Brunswick Chapel, Liverpool, stands conspicuous for magnitude of debt and negligent management. The cost of this Chapel was £10,956; the debt when relieved £12,708. The

Chapel Fund granted £1000, and the Trustees with their friends raised £3000: of this latter sum £1000 were granted from the Trust fund of Mount-pleasant Chapel, in Liverpool; and £500 a legacy from a Trustee of Brunswick Chapel lately deceased. By what means the debt accumulated to £12,708, we cannot pretend to tell, for when this case came to be examined, there were no regular accounts, no books forthcoming, *nothing but memoranda*. We know that when the Chapel was built, a handsome sum was subscribed and collected. This sum, of course, remains unaccounted for. There was also a considerable piece of land bought along with the Chapel, which has, or might have been resold at very advanced prices, for building upon, and for graves. We cannot, however, be expected to tell any tales from the secret history of this or any other Chapel,—for the Trustees and Preachers, in the pride and bravery of their trusts, are much too discreet and sagacious to publish periodical accounts to those who are the benefactors and supporters of their Chapels. Such, indeed, is the practice with the managers of the great charitable institutions, hospitals, &c. which adorn this country; but Methodism is much too wise and upright to descend to follow their example. **SECRECY** is the dignified principle of our ecclesiastical rule. In other institutions supported by charity, a donation of £20 entitles men to honorary distinction, and to a voice in their management; but if you give largely to a Methodist Chapel, you shall remain, nevertheless, in utter ignorance of its finances and management, and at a later day be surprised by urgent applications for fresh relief.—How long shall these things remain so?

We are certain that we do not exaggerate when we state the debts of the five Methodist Chapels in Liverpool, to amount to about £25,000. Whether Brunswick with its remaining debt of £8500, will constantly meet its expenses we cannot tell,—but it does not appear probable. Mount-pleasant Chapel, the smallest of the set, and one of the oldest, is in excellent circumstances; but Pitt-street is a defaulter; Leeds-street is deficient, and Wesley Chapel Stanhope-street (*aye, there's the rub,*) is, we understand, in a sad predicament. This latter chapel has been built *only* three years, and is on the modern plan, viz. three pulpits, splendid organ, rich cornices, extensive and ornamental railing, beautiful portico, apparatus for warm air, &c.: it is large, handsome, and expensive, and, like all such bastard rivals of the establishment, oppressive and ruinous to the Trustees and society. When this Chapel was built, subscriptions and collections amounting to upwards of £1000 were made, with the understanding that the cost of the Chapel should be about £6000. Sinister rumours, however, have lately been set afloat from influential quarters, to the effect that the stone quarry has suddenly failed; that the expense of filling up was very great, and enormous weight consequently entailed on the trust. To those who do not understand these allusions, it is necessary to state, that when the land for the Chapel was bought, a large plot was taken on speculation; the clay was made into bricks—the stone was got out—and one or two large houses built by the Trustees. This speculation well accords with the modern system of trusts, which consists in rendering complex affairs which are always loosely managed. Thus we read perpetually of single Chapels taking up

money on annuities, as if the complexity of annuities were a desirable employment for the calculating skill of the Trustees. These simple men, we suppose, imagine to themselves how nice a thing it will be to have a large sum extinguished on the death of the annuitant, but they forget the rapid accumulation of the large rate of interest, whilst year after year, the stout and healthy annuitant provokingly ekes out his span of existence. All such schemes and speculations are utterly ridiculous, and altogether without the province of trusteeships. The picture of trust-management in Liverpool, we do not doubt might be paralleled in other circuits.

Whilst pointing out these cases of gross and glaring extravagance, let us not be charged with the design of throwing suspicion on the great body of fair claimants on the Chapel Fund. We know that a multitude of families are involved, without any fault of their own, in ruinous liabilities for the Chapel debts of the Methodist connexion. We deeply and earnestly sympathize with these families. They are the most generous, disinterested, and zealous friends of Methodism ; and, as we have already shewn from the report, it is the general cry, that they have been drawn into their present alarming situation by the travelling preachers. It is in reference to these families that the operation of the Chapel Fund, as detailed in this report, strikes us as iniquitous and unjust.

Whenever have such families been known to be wanting in liberal pecuniary support of the cause of Methodism ? On the erection of a Chapel, the master of the house has not only exceeded the expectation of his religious friends in the liberality of his donation, but the wife, (and in many cases every child) has been also assessed to the general contribution. Then there is not only the private subscription, but several sermons at the opening, and at anniversaries, at each of which, every member of the family, down to the very infant, must contribute. The Chapel is then settled on the Conference, and these families are fully committed to support it, for the father is a Trustee, and responsible for the debt. They redeem this pledge to the utmost. They give all they can spare ; and it is because they cannot do more, without serious injury to their own temporal interests, that the voice of distress is heard, and an appeal made to the Chapel Fund. What reception do they then meet with from the Committee ?

Frequently it is found that through inattention or want of information their first application is defective in point of form. We have known cases in which two or three years have been lost in approaching the Committee, through the requisite and complicated forms which these gentlemen have thought fit to prescribe. And the fault has generally rested with the superintendent, on whom the people rely in such cases.

When at length the case comes regularly before the Committee, the answer is "if you want help from us you must first help yourselves ; what do you propose to raise amongst yourselves ?" Here is the pinch ! It is not now any question of christian benevolence

or liberality. It is no longer, what can you afford to **GIVE** ? But the creditor is clamouring for his **interest**—perhaps for his **principal**—due on the Chapel, and no answer can be had from the Chapel Fund Committee until they are informed what the Trustees propose to raise. The case being thus understood, and thus urgent, the Trustee who can best afford it, comes forward and puts down his name for a given sum, on the condition (a condition afterwards tardily, but of necessity, in some instances, relaxed ; for, all his Co-trustees cannot keep pace with him, and some have no property whatever) that every member of the Trust, or *his friends for him*, do subscribe a like sum. Now if a small trader shall have a little honey in store for the winter of life, or a small provision in the savings bank against any domestic emergency, the next consultation is betwixt him and his family, and the partner of his life must make up her mind whether she will give up her husband to gaol, and her family to ruin, or make a pious offering of their mutual savings to God !!! The sacrifice once made, the husband is perhaps patient and resigned, the wife frets and repines, and the children look on and listen ; but whatever may hereafter become of the latter, it is not very probable they will ever become Methodists.

The above case proceeds on the supposition that there is a little property in the family. But we should be very glad to be informed how many persons who have thus been assessed to the public debt of Methodism, have failed to pay twenty shillings in the pound to their *bona fide* creditors ?

We will not condescend to argue upon such cases. Let him come forward to defend or deny them who can. Our objection is, that the whole revenue of the Chapel Fund is employed in this system of extortion. We observe that it is not here and there a case in which Trustees are able and willing to make a generous sacrifice, but that no one case occurs in the whole list, in which relief has been granted from this Fund until the Trustees have first put down a sum twice or thrice the amount of the relief granted. Thus the Fund itself is made the instrument of grinding oppression. The inference is inevitable. Either those Trusts which are too poor to make these sacrifices, and who ought to be the first claimants on the Fund, are altogether excluded, or else, pressed by a hard necessity, they do actually make the sacrifice at the expense of their family interests or of their injured creditors.

The total amount which can be raised upon the present system—by appeals from all our pulpits—by the calls of Preachers and Trustees at the door of every respectable Methodist—by the annual appeals of Messrs. Marriott and Naylor, (which we should be sorry to criticize)—and even by mortgaging the general Fund—is for the last year £5665. Yet the amount derived from the system of extortion is nearly twice that sum, viz. £10,165 ! Yes ! *more than twice* the amount of what can be raised by the annual public collections and private subscriptions throughout the Methodist connexion ! And by such means have Chapels, settled on the Methodist Conference, been relieved of debt to the amount of £15,834 !

It is well that we are not engaged to consider the morality of this case. But did ever any society, calling itself christian, adopt or sanction a similar method of increasing the amount of its public property?

Some of our objections to the General Chapel Fund—to its constitution, administration, and effects, are now before the public. It has been abused by the Conference to strengthen and increase, what may be called, their *political* influence over the circuits and societies, and to undermine the liberties of the people; and they have unblushingly proceeded to pass regulations for diverting the Fund itself to the erection of new Chapels! It has been administered so as to pamper the vitiated taste of too many of our people for gaudy and expensive Chapels, in which the simplicity of Methodism is lost, and in which, by the introduction of Organs, Liturgies, and all the paraphernalia of a dignified hierarchy, the preachers seek to swell their own importance and *ape* the clergy of the establishment. It may be truly called "*the Chapel Fund*," but it cannot truly be called "a Fund for the relief of distressed Trustees." On the contrary, it is a Fund for redeeming and enlarging the public property of the connexion in Chapels, partly by voluntary subscription, but *chiefly* by forced contributions from those distressed Trustees and their friends; and these contributions are rigorously exacted, to the injury, if not the ruin, of many a deserving family, and many a defrauded creditor. In fact the administration of this Fund is a continued violation of several of the clearest principles of natural right and of scriptural morality. But why should we multiply objections? To men who are determined to receive no light upon any of the affairs of Methodism, except through the medium of a preacher, we do not address ourselves; but to every intelligent and reflecting Methodist, whose heart and conscience are open to the truth, we have said more than enough to convince him that the "*General Chapel Fund*," as at present constituted and administered, ought not to receive his support. We have so far extended our remarks that we must reserve our plan for the relief of Trustees until our next number.

(To be concluded in our next.)

#### TO THE REVEREND THE MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST CONFERENCE.

REVEREND SIRS.—The singular rise, the rapid achievements, and the vast extension of your venerable body, are events which the historian may seize with eagerness, and the christian contemplate with admiration and gratitude. The one, because of their near affinity to that most important event which the history of the world records,—the original propagation of christianity; and the other, because of their providential introduction or restoration to evangelical religion, of so large a proportion of our country and of the world. The successors of that great christian philanthropist, the reverend Mr. Wesley, you have planted vitality in "regions of the shadow of death;" where it lingered in the Churches, you have revived and re-animated it; and to the interposition of your pious

and apostolical labours is our island indebted for much of that moral and christian character, by which it is distinguished from the licentiousness, and shielded from the calamities, of neighbouring states.

This essential relation to, and connection with, the christian world, stamps with vital importance those measures, which, as the prime movers in the great machine of Methodism, you may be induced to adopt. With these views I have earnestly to solicit your candid attention, while I endeavour, freely to state, and humbly propose a remedy for, an evil, which is but too conspicuously prevalent in your sacred community, and one that is linked with consequences the most direful.

The evil, to which I am compelled to call your attention, is the growing spirit of party and faction; than which, nothing can be more deleterious to the character and efficiency of your proceedings. To shew that such a spirit does influence your body, although other instances, too numerous, might be selected, I need only revert to the memorable history of the late transactions at Leeds. To go into detail is unnecessary. The facts are palpable, uncontroverted and incontrovertible. The summary of them amounts to this: a party of your assembly, in defiance of constitutional right, with reckless desperation, introduced into a peaceable and happy society, a most offensive measure; with ungodly haste cut off the conscientious non-conformists; filled the Church with the most unhappy dissensions; and for all this, procured your sanction and approbation—your *unanimous* approbation I will not say—it would be a libel on your body. In witness that such is the true construction, I appeal to common sense, to your own convictions, and to the special address of Mr. Watson. Had a person of less ability and information attempted such a vindication, the testimony would have been less decisive. But doubtless Mr. Watson urged every possible *argument* with every advantage that superior knowledge and skill could confer; yet the attempt was a display of the humblest chicanery, *vox et præterea nihil*. It did not even touch the case, and it remains a tacit acknowledgment of the defencelessness of a bad cause.

The aim of Government, civil and religious, is the well-being of society. The jurisdiction of the former, is in the fears; that of the latter, in the affections, of mankind. It would be just as inconsistent for the magistrate to descend to persuasion, as it would for the minister to employ coercion in the administration of their several offices. Designed for the *general* good, no such institution therefore exists merely for the *particular* advantage of its own members, nor can it lay claim to rights which cannot be referred to the public happiness. Christian ministers have powers and rights arising naturally from their office; but, considered merely as a question of this general character, these must never, from views of personal importance, be made inimical to public interests. When these powers are deduced from the precepts of the Gospel, they are no more than the power of doing good. The life of the great teacher and of his apostles, affectingly exemplifies the declaration, that they came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and

sacrifice, if necessary, even life itself in the cause of human happiness. Ministers, as the word imports, are the *servants*, not the *masters*, of the Church. On the one side of this tribunal of natural and scriptural sentiments, to range the thousand individuals wantonly cut off from christian communion, together with the vast multitudes, amongst whom the seeds of jealousy and division, the most fatal to religious prosperity, have consequently been sown; and on the other side, to marshal the imprudent party who, with so much indifference, gave birth to these calamities,—I could scarcely suppress a smile, did not the seriousness of the matter forbid so much levity, at the contemptible plea and pretence of *power* and *right* in those who inflicted them! Such rights are unfounded. If otherwise, they are at variance with every quality that is estimable in a minister of the Gospel. Had, however, such been substantiated, humanity, much more pastoral solicitude, should have forbidden such an outrage. What then, but an irresistible and daring faction, could have obtained your recorded approbation of conduct so unfeeling and ignominious? Such a faction *does* exist, and it is awfully potent!

To analyze the nature and operations of a spirit so baneful, must open to the mind a train of evils, some of which will exceed in number and malignity even that just adverted to. Faction is generally founded in pride. It despairs the trammels of justice and consuetudinary forms. Animated by ambition, and influenced by opposition, virtue, conscience, and humanity, magnanimity, honor and truth, are often and at once sacrificed at the shrine of its unbounded aspirations. Contemplate, Sirs, its inevitable and approaching effects in the Methodist Conference, and its connexion throughout the world. It will first affect yourselves. Instead of the independent inquirers after truth, you must become the abject slaves of an imperious party. Every remonstrance, however just, will summarily be followed by a penal visitation. Those, whose partiality to peace compels their silence, must bear the stigma of decisions which they reprobate. Those who, with greatness of mind and christian intrepidity, boldly censure every unjust proceeding, must bewail the severity of their virtue in an indigent circuit. The aspirant to the sacred office will have less to dread from judgment and candour in his examination, than from the unpropitiated haughtiness of an absolute party. He must truckle and flatter; he must emulate his competitors in mean compliances; nor will he succeed until he has sapped the vigour of that principle, by whose impulse alone he will dare to denounce the vices of the rich; whilst, confident in the patronage and support of the cabal, he thinks himself independent of the claims of the poor. Your missionaries, imbued with despotic conceits, will embark for their stations as the legates of a papal court, and having there displayed their brief authority, and for ever prejudiced the cause of missions, will return to your asylum, branded with inerasable marks of contempt and detestation.

You, Reverend Sirs, not your people, will be the slaves of this unlawful faction. The people cannot be enslaved to that which has *no* physical power. The *civil* jurisdiction of Conference is fortunately circumscribed by the walls of the building in which it

is held. The following, however, are some of the external effects of the absolution of this faction:—The people will, by and bye, *en masse* discover and reprobate its oppressive policy. Its *present* strength lies in a merely adventitious advantage—the natural indisposition of our society at large to suspect a popular Methodist preacher. This advantage is, however, hourly diminishing. Disaffection is but too rapidly spreading. The petulance and vituperation, so freely indulged by the celebrated innovator of our constitution, are perceptibly undermining his own popularity and that of his coadjutors; and, by giving increased circulation and a new feature of probability to such irrefragable documents as those issued by the London South Circuit, are opening a scene of action as extraordinary as unsuspected.

As, by the mercy of God, you have been the honored instruments of giving spiritual life to thousands of our race, so, on the same instrumentality, is the preservation of that life made to depend. Like some great tree you have spread forth into various and distant parts those prolific branches, the permanence of whose fruit is no less dependent on the healthiness and vigor of the parent stock, than was its first production. A bad influence imbibed by your important assembly, unless prudently and promptly checked, will rage with fearful rapidity through every fibre until the whole becomes corrupted. So much hangs upon the wisdom, the disinterestedness, and the determination, with which you may resort to remedial measures.

Experience, ancient and modern, has taught the fatal impolicy of establishing independent and irresponsible authority. If Mr. Wesley erred in any important point, it most certainly was in framing the constitution of the Methodist Conference—in assigning to itself *alone* the trial of its own members. I grant there is, in this arrangement, an ostensible analogy to that distinguished feature of British judicature—the trial by jury. But the analogy is unreal. In a prosecution for felony, the identity of interest on the part of the jurors, which is supposed to excite in them a fellow feeling towards the accused, does not consist in their being chosen from a band of highwaymen, but merely from persons classed in the same civil estate. But what is the singular situation of the Methodist conference? That body is at this moment accused of the violation of a fundamental law. Who are its empanelled jurors? Perhaps the very men who concerted and accomplished the mischief! The charity of Mr. Wesley disposed him to confide in the professed integrity and virtue of that assembly. But virtue, alas! is a plant too fragile and corruptible to flourish in a soil so unfriendly as ours. It is, nevertheless, to this principle that I now appeal, and I do it with the confidence that it is not irrecoverably decayed, though the rude elements of faction have beaten down and almost concealed its modest head. I address myself to those who are acquainted with *facts*, and with every possible circumstance to extenuate them. Of such, I appeal to the conscience, unbiassed by interest, uninfluenced by intimidation. The christian dignity of your assembly—a sense of personal honor and justice; the renunciation of every secular motive as ministers of your humble master; and sympathy with an affectionate but divided people

—should prompt and stimulate you to justify yourselves, and to heal the open wounds of your society.

As a remedy I would venture to suggest some such plan as the following:—If a secular and unjust faction is destined to influence your proceedings, let an *opposing* force be formed and supported, whose principle shall be—not that of *universal* opposition—but an inflexible determination to resist every unwise and unrighteous measure, and to found every decision upon the honorable basis of equity and wisdom, of christian affection and pastoral solicitude. Thus, Sirs, by sacrificing to public weal and rights those worldly prospects, which some would tempt you to think advantageous, you will secure a nobler satisfaction in the esteem and confidence of a grateful people.

The materials for this “opposition” are perhaps more numerous, efficient, and available, than might at first be supposed. The majority of your body, doubtless, retain a susceptibility of honor, and their holy indignation at some late transactions requires but a vent. Were the sentiments of each of these unobservedly communicated to the other, a union would immediately ensue,—the vent would be fearlessly opened, and the opposition at once consolidated. Before another of your assemblings, much strength might be discovered and associated, by the agency of prudent individuals whilst in their several circuits, and whilst passing through a variety of others, either before, or on the way to Conference. The first result of your success should be the degradation or the expulsion of those who have disgraced you—to abrogate and erase the “minute” commendatory of the agents in the Leeds business, and to assure the connection that its affection and confidence (which are your *greatest* power) are the *only* power you aspire to.

The enviable immortality of the individual who shall first attempt the formation of this righteous opposition, awaits some magnanimous spirit, yet dormant. Who does not pray, that the Spirit of God may endue such with restless and resistless energy? Mr. Wesley's name is revered as the founder,—that man's will be handed down to posterity as the saviour, of Methodism. Say not that the illustrious heads of the faction are men who have fostered, and whose talents have made them essential to Methodism. The period of their lives, twice told, would be insufficient to atone for the mischiefs they have introduced. Methinks I see here explained the mystery that envelopes the removal, from their sphere of usefulness, of such amiable men as the late Mr. Stoner. Their talents would render them conspicuous. Elevated in the praises of the multitude, its idolatry might have turned them arrogant and despotic; and, having first undermined their own salvation, with pleas the most specious and hypocritical, like “wolves in sheep's clothing,” they might have desolated the Church, spreading anarchy and irreligion, where once reigned order and piety! Nor say their opponents are only a factious few, as destitute of religion as of veracity. True—our Society is too numerous to exclude *every* captious spirit, but even to such, Providence has assigned a duty which perhaps another disposition is incompetent to discharge.

When time shall have explored the truth to the public eye, the resistance now maintained, amidst so much obloquy, by the honest non-conformists shall appear (*whatever* may have been their character) an essential and redeeming virtue; and their future honor shall be in proportion to the present vituperation and foul abuse of their names.

When Cato, jealous of a rival nation, reiterated in the Roman Senate the memorable sentence “*Delenda est Carthago*,”—Carthage must be annihilated; Nasica, as often, exclaimed “*Servanda est Carthago*,”—Carthage must be preserved. The sentiment of the former proclaimed his ambition and impolicy; that of the latter, his magnanimity and prudence. Cato built the glory of Rome upon absolute and universal dominion, and therefore hated a rival. Nasica saw, in the consequent luxury, the enervation and final overthrow of the state, and desired a check so salutary. The senate rejected, but the event justified his counsel. Rome, impregnable to danger and hardship, fell by her voluptuousness and effeminacy! This, Sirs, is an affecting example! Some there are who would relax and destroy the only existing check upon ambition and corruption in the Methodist Conference, by silencing the voice of the people. One, with the assumed and characteristic title of “General,” would rule a christian society with even *military* rigor; another, moved by that contempt of vulgar opinion, familiar to the intellectual pride of a *philosophic* mind, has stretched out a feeble hand to support this usurped authority; whilst many are not ashamed openly to espouse so bad a cause. Of such a project, however, *succes* itself, even were it possible, is certain *defeat*; and the effort serves only to mark the improbity of the mind that makes it. Of what class of men is this public voice to be suppressed? That very one, of whom truth authorises, and (in the present state of affairs) justice demands, the statement: That, *collectively*, they have contributed more to the diffusion of Methodism than that class, some individuals of which are so disposed to wrong them. Mr. Wesley was happy in the discovery of a method which permitted (nay even required) the pious labours of the great majority of his private members. In some mode—as prayer leaders, class leaders, preachers, or otherwise—all were expected and disposed to co-operate. In this respect Methodism is distinct from every other Church. The travelling preachers, unquestionably, are the pastors: but who discharge the most *extensively* and the most *minutely* the duties of the pastoral office in our Church? Our class leaders. Many of the local preachers are, *individually*, as talented and efficient, and, *altogether*, far more so than our itinerant ministry. Is any dubious, let him make the calculation. The mention of these things is by no means intended to give offence, and the statement of them is imperative, when it is contemptuously asked upon what ground our local authorities claim an independent participation in church government? The attempt to deprive these men of their rights and privileges, on the simple ground that their labours are *gratuitous*, is as ungrateful as it is ridiculous and despicable.

Liberty is property. He who, by fraud or violence, would usurp the sacred benefit, is a dishonest man; and he can hardly escape the same imputation, who connives at, when he might prevent

the mischief. The liberties of our Society have been daringly attacked. You have the power to repel and overthrow the assailants. The eyes of the christian world are upon you, and, with an interest hitherto unprecedented, watching your proceedings. We have heard from your pulpits, the doctrine—that when the course of duty is impeded by the enticements of interest or the intimidation of illegal authority, christian courage should dictate undaunted perseverance. Providence has, at length, called you as a body, to exemplify your own principles in the face of the world; to prove whether pusillanimity or virtue,—whether intimidation or justice,—has the greater sway in your community. Of what will be the result of this appeal, I must of course be ignorant. If unsuccessful, I shall content myself with the reflection—that I have raised my voice, though feeble, against impious and dangerous usurpation: and that it will not be the first instance in which an assembly, entrusted with the public good, has listened with indifference to the claims of law and equity, founded on oppressive and intolerable grievances. If, on the other hand, these statements receive an attentive consideration, I may indulge the animating hope that,—by the appearance of a redeeming principle, hitherto latent, but irresistible when once put into operation,—at no very distant period, the dignity of your body shall be retrieved, the scoffs of the infidel silenced, our unhappy discords cease, and the interesting spectacle, again presented, of “brethren who dwell together in unity.”

Be this as it may, I have one request to make—to which candour should forbid a refusal—and that is, that you will not suffer to be

*calumniated* those whom *conscience* compels to resist the assaults of arbitrary and unlawful authority. I remember the narrative of an unfortunate female, who, having plundered a neighbour, to exculpate herself, laid information against an innocent woman, who was, in consequence, arrested for the crime. This was by all considered an instance of unusual atrocity. But here, worthy individuals, first pillaged of their constitutional rights, are themselves then branded, by the plunderers, with the infamy which attaches only to the perpetrators of the crime. A parallel to this will scarcely be discovered.

Reverend Sirs, I have ventured to address *you* as the Conference, because the “party” censured, having renounced its fundamental laws, have *virtually* excluded themselves from its membership; and this I have done with something of confidence in the result; because I am convinced that a majority amongst you is yet sound and untainted, and equally competent and disposed to redress the grievances of the people. In conclusion, I cannot suppress my earnest prayer that the great head of the Church may inspire *you* with the requisite wisdom and fortitude, and thus prevent the unhappy feelings which must become general ere the *people* attempt their *own* redress.

I am, most respectfully,

Your very humble servant,

FIDELIS.

*Liverpool, March 19, 1831.*

#### FUNDS OF THE CIRCULAR.

In our last number we promised to furnish this month a statement of the funds and expenses of the Circular. We are induced to take this course by two reasons:—*first*, because this work is supported by subscriptions and donations from the Methodist public, and they have therefore a right to know how the money is applied; and, *secondly*, because the preachers have circulated a false report, to the effect that this work

is carried on by a few needy individuals for the sake of profit. We shall not be much surprised if those persons, who have belied our motives, should, after perusing this account, forthwith contradict their former reports, and, for the sake of continuing our reproach, declare that we have published this statement merely to trumpet forth our own liberality.

We are not, however, much moved by what our opponents say of us. We only regret that they should be obliged to have recourse to such weapons, to use against us the uncertain shafts of calumny, instead of the two-edged sword of truth.

Dr.

*Circular, in Account with the Treasurer.*

Cr.

		£.	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.	
1830.					1830.				
31st Dec.	Cost of 20,200 Circulars and 4541 Posting Bills .....	162	17	4	31st Dec.	Receipts of Sale, by sundry Booksellers ..	32	5	4
	Travelling Expenses, establishing communication between London, Liverpool, Manchester, &c. &c. .....	12	16	6	1831.				
	Advertising, Carriage, Postage, and other Expenses .....	14	16	2	31st March	Subscriptions, as already acknowledged *	102	10	0
						Loan, volunteered by a friend (to be repaid)	20	0	0
		£	190	10		Balance, to be carried to debit 31st Dec.	35	14	8
				0		1830, besides the Loan .....			
1830.									
31st Dec.	To Balance, as above .....	£35	14	8		£	190	10	0

1830.

31st Dec. To Balance, as above .....

\* See notices to Correspondents.

As a set-off to this balance of £55 14s 8d, including the loan, there is of course a large sum due from various booksellers; but, as this sum is diffused in small amounts throughout the kingdom, there will arise considerable difficulty and expense in the collection. We beg to point out to our readers and subscribers, that as this work was new and untried, it was necessary to send it to the booksellers, for the first year, *on agency*. This has already entailed on our publication great expense, and will, no doubt, cause a large deduction to be made on the outstanding accounts for carriage and advertisements. When it is considered that this small threepenny publication has penetrated into every part of the empire, wonder may arise that the expense of diffusion has not been much greater. But the conductors and the friends who have helped them on, have been zealous, for they felt their cause to be good, and they have therefore spared neither personal labour nor expense. If, as has been reported of us, we had undertaken this work for gain, we appeal to the understandings of men, whether we have taken the course likely to accomplish such object: on the contrary, we assure our readers, no person has been connected with the Circular who has not paid instead of received, and who has not been personally engaged in active services, and ready to do many times more than what they have hitherto done; but we wish to point out to those, who charge us with doing these things for *filthy lucre's* sake, that they are outraging common sense and experience.

The plan of sending the work for sale *on agency*, was continued only for one year; therefore, the expenses for the future will be kept within a narrower compass; but, as we think it desirable to give it as extended a circulation as possible, subscriptions will still be necessary to defray the cost of advertisements, &c. To those friends who have so generously contributed their money, and to those who have furnished us with written articles, we offer our warmest thanks, and assure them that we are more than ever disposed to give our exertions to attain the just and legitimate objects which we have set before us, and doubt not that they are equally well disposed. To those, whose ungenerous and illegal acts we have exposed, we offer a few observations, which this publication of our funds readily suggest. We are sorry that we cannot hope to make any impression on such characters, by the usual appeals to charity and equity, we therefore appeal to their interest. It is notorious, that the Societies are declining in numbers,—that the Conference, or the ruling faction of the Conference, has forfeited the esteem of the Societies,—that the funds of the Conference are decaying,—that enormous debt hangs and presses upon the Trustees' Chapels in some circuits,—and, in addition to all these things, this paper makes it evident that the funds, which have been hitherto contributed in aid of the Conference, are about to be employed in reducing the pretensions of that body. In Roman history it is related that, although the haughty senate of Rome refused the freedom of their city to the petitions, yet, after many bloody battles, they granted it to the armed demands of their Italian confederates; for they reflected with themselves that, whether conquerors or conquered, they were about to be ruined. Can the Methodist Conference bear to fight with its supporters? Can a power, based upon opinion, disregard the public voice? Or, can a town prolong its resistance, with enemies at the walls, and enemies in the citadel? Such is the situation of that faction which now domineers over both the Conference and Societies. But we need not the gift of prophecy to foretell its downfall, for it is plainly without the nature of things that are, that this faction and its principles can much longer exist.

Considerable attempts have been made to discover the authors of the Circular, and some persons who are not connected with us have endured no small portion of annoyance; but in order to save certain "Generals" any further trouble, we now inform them, that whatever discoveries may be made, this work will still go on as mysteriously as ever, until the fit

time for a development shall arrive; for it depends not on a few obscure individuals, but has for its support men who are the strong pillars of Methodism. If it be desirable to the faction to know who are our contributors, let the Conference itself be tested. We hope the day is not far distant when a champion of the people shall arise within the walls of the Conference, who, bold and fearless, shall assail the strongholds of faction, and rescue that assembly from its debasing thraldom. Experience teaches men to look for such events,—all history abounds with examples,—and if Martin Luther gave to Antichrist a mortal wound, what shall now deter a man from attempting a far easier exploit? But, whether such a champion arise or not, will not much signify to the people; they are determined no longer to be harassed by the continual operation of the Conference maxim "*Divide and Rule*"; the retaliating cry of the societies has already gone forth, *Unite and Conquer*.

EDTS.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"A CONSTANT READER," of Lambeth, and "A WESLEYAN," of Spital-fields, are received; but we are of opinion that the information communicated by them is of too old date to be generally interesting.

"ALPHA'S" promised Communication has not reached us.

"AN OLD METHODIST," of Shrewsbury, is received.

"AN OLD METHODIST," of Birmingham, in our next.

We shall be glad to hear again from our respected Correspondent "CYRUS."

We have received several complaints of the disappointment many of our friends have experienced, in several places, in consequence of the non-arrival of the Circular at the expected time. Our friends generally are now informed, that this Publication must be ordered (through the medium of a Bookseller) from London, as it is not now sent to the different towns on sale or return, as formerly.

We beg to remind our friend in the Principality, of our readiness to receive and attend to his promised Communication, and hope that he will send it forward with as little delay as possible.

## Recapitulation of Contributions to 31st March, 1831.

Liverpool North.....	£46 10 0
Liverpool South.....	18 10 0
London First South .....	18 8 0
London First West .....	1 10 0
London Second West .....	2 0 0
Deptford .....	1 0 0
Nottingham.....	2 2 0
Rochdale .....	5 0 0
Todmorden .....	1 0 0
Birmingham.....	2 0 0
Manchester .....	2 0 0
Leeds .....	2 10 0
	<hr/>
	£102 10 0

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W.M.C.

Oct

# The Circular

TO

FROM

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XVII.

31ST MAY, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

### THE GENERAL CHAPEL FUND.

*(Continued from page 124.)*

We now proceed, according to promise, to develop our proposed

#### A PLAN,

#### FOR THE RELIEF OF DISTRESSED TRUSTEES OF METHODIST CHAPELS.

I.—Let a union be formed of all those Trustees of Chapels in England and Wales, who shall subscribe to the amount of 10s 6d annually, and none others.

II.—Let the operations of this General Association be effected through an annual meeting, and by means of District and Circuit Associations, viz.

#### III.—OF THE CIRCUIT ASSOCIATION.

1.—Let there be in every circuit an Association of all the Trustees who shall subscribe as above, and who shall assemble once at the least in every quarter of the year.

2.—Let the Circuit Association appoint a Treasurer, a Secretary, two Collectors, and a Committee of Management.

3.—Let the Committee of Management assemble once a month, and direct their attention to the obtaining correct information, according to schedules to be provided as after mentioned, as to the circumstances of every Chapel in the circuit. Let them inspect the account of the Collectors, and see that the collections and subscriptions are regularly made throughout the circuit.

4.—In addition to the annual public collections and private subscriptions, let every Chapel claiming the benefit of this Institution, be assessed in a small amount to the general fund.

5.—Let the Circuit Association, twice a year, at the

March and September quarter, nominate a representative to attend the ensuing meeting of the District Association, and let all the information which shall have been collected, as to every Chapel in the circuit, whether embarrassed or not, be transmitted to the Secretary of the District Association.

6.—Let the private subscriptions be called for in the spring, and the public collections be made in the autumn of every year; and let the Circuit Treasurer pay over twice a year, to the District Treasurer, all moneys which shall have been collected in the circuit.

#### IV.—OF THE DISTRICT ASSOCIATION.

1.—Let there be a meeting of Associated Trustees, twice a year, in every district; to be held in the months of May and September, and consisting of at least one representative from every circuit, and of as many other Trustees residing within the district, and subscribing as above, as shall think proper to attend.

2.—Let the District Association appoint a Treasurer, Secretary, Clerks, and Committees of Finance, Investigation, and Distribution; to be elected annually, at the May meeting.

3.—Let all the accounts be referred to the Committee of Finance, examined and reported on from time to time to the District Association.

4.—Let it be referred to the Committee of Investigation, to examine all cases claiming relief; to see that the information required thereon by the schedules is complete, and to report each case severally to the District Association.

5.—When the District Association shall have decided to recommend any case to the general Annual Meeting for relief, let every such case be given in charge to the Committee of Investigation, to see it, with all its details, properly laid before the Annual Meeting; and at the following meeting of the District Association, in September, let this committee act as a Committee of Distribution, to see the relief granted properly applied.

6.—At the meeting of the District Association, in May and September, let the Circuit Treasurers pay over to the District Treasurer all moneys in their hands, and deliver to him a correct list of all subscribers in each circuit of 10s 6d or upwards, to be published in the annual printed report.

7.—Let the District Treasurers, within one month after the meeting of the District Association, pay over all moneys received from the Circuit Treasurers to the General Treasurers of the Association, transmitting at the same time correct copies of the lists of subscribers in every circuit.

8.—Let the Secretary of the District Association, within one month after every meeting, transmit to the Secretary of the Annual Meeting a copy of all resolutions passed by the District Meeting, and all documents relating thereto, or to any recommendation which the District Association shall think proper to make to the Annual Meeting.

9.—As it will be of the greatest importance that each District Association should have an official Representative present at the Annual Meeting, let such Representative be annually appointed at the May meeting of the District Association, and let him be furnished by the District Treasurer with a copy of his accounts, and by the District Secretary with a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the District Association at least one month before the Annual Meeting.

10.—And to prevent all inconvenience and disappointment, let every Representative, who shall require the same, receive from the Chairman and Secretary of the District Association a note signed by them respectively, which shall entitle him to receive from the General Treasurers such sum as the Annual Meeting shall think fit to allow him for his travelling and other necessary expenses of attending such annual meeting.

#### V.—OF THE ANNUAL MEETING.

1.—Let a general meeting of the Associated Trustees be held annually; the said meeting to consist of, at least, one *Official Representative* from every District Association.

2.—Let the first acts of such general meeting be to choose a Chairman, a General Secretary, and two General Treasurers, for the year ensuing.

3.—Let them next choose three standing Committees—one of **FINANCE**; one of **INVESTIGATION**; and a third of **DISTRIBUTION**; and let a Chairman and Secretary be appointed to each of these Committees.

#### 1.—FINANCE.

4.—Let all matters relating to the income and expenditure of the Association be referred to the Committee of **Finance** in the first instance. Let this Committee report from time to time, in writing, to the General Meeting, upon every matter which shall come before them; and let no discussion take place in the General Meeting, on any matter thus referred, except upon the Report of the Committee.

5.—The decision of the General Meeting having been obtained on the separate Reports of the Finance Committee, let all such Reports, with the decisions thereon, be referred back again to the Committee, with instructions to prepare a General Report on the Finances, to be afterwards printed.

6.—Let no *second* discussion take place on any case until the presentation of the General Report, when it will be open to the General Meeting, to review and correct or confirm its former decision, on each separate case, provided such review shall be called for by any party interested.

#### 2.—INVESTIGATION OF CASES.

7.—Let all cases which shall have been recommended for relief, be referred in the first instance to the Committee of Investigation. Let this Committee report separately on the facts and circumstances of each case from time to time, and suggest the nature and amount of the relief required. Let the case be discussed in the General Meeting only upon the presentation of the report; and let the decision on this discussion be simply, whether the case shall be relieved or not, and without reference to the suggestion of the Committee as to the amount of relief to be granted.

#### 3.—DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.

8.—As soon as the *general* Report of the Finance Committee shall have been confirmed by the General Meeting, let it be laid before the Committee of Distribution, who will thence ascertain the total amount of the Fund available for distribution. Let all the Reports of the Committee of Investigation, which shall have been confirmed by the General Meeting, be also laid before this Committee, and let them proceed to apportion the relief to each individual case, in reference to the exigency of its circumstances—the number of cases to be provided for—and the amount of the fund to be distributed.

9.—Let this Committee, in the *first* instance, direct its attention to the liquidation of Interest in arrear, and to deficiencies of annual income to meet the necessary expenditure; and *secondly*, let them consider on what Chapels it may be expedient and practicable to attempt a reduction of the standing debt.

10.—Let no report be made by this Committee to the General Meeting, until they are in a situation to make a general report, comprising all the cases, and the nature and amount of the relief proposed to be granted in each case.

11.—On such general report being presented by the Committee of Distribution, let it be first read throughout, and let an hour be then fixed for taking it into consideration, so as to allow time for all parties interested to become acquainted with its contents, before any discussion takes place upon it.

12.—When the report is called on for discussion, let every case be separately and distinctly named. Let the General Secretary then read the report of the Committee of Investigation on that particular case, with

so much of the report of the Committee of Distribution as relates thereto. Let the discussion and decision of the General Meeting then follow.

13.—When the General Committee shall have gone through the report, and decided on every case, in case alterations shall have been made, let the report be referred back again to the Committee of Distribution, to be reconsidered and presented in an amended form, according to the decision of the General Meeting on each case. And let this be done as often as alterations shall be made by the General Meeting, and until that meeting shall be prepared to adopt the report in its entire form.

14.—In discussing an amended report, let no reference be made to any case which shall not have been altered, or upon which the report of the Committee has been adopted and confirmed.

15.—Let the three Secretaries of Committees, together with the Secretary of the General Meeting, be charged with the drawing up of a general report, containing a suitable address to the public, a proper selection of cases, and a clear and full statement of all the pecuniary transactions of the Association; and let such report be read, passed, and ordered to be printed by the Annual Meeting.

16.—Let the official Representative of each District Association receive from the General Treasurers the amount of moneys allotted for his District, and let him, at the next September meeting, pay over to the Circuit Treasurers the amount due to each Circuit respectively.

#### VI.—GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

1.—Immediately after the election of the Committees, the minutes of all the District Associations should be read in the General Meeting, which should occupy itself in discussing all recommendations therein contained; in reviewing in principle and detail, the organization and operation of the Association, with regard to its improvement and beneficial application; in adopting proper forms and schedules to be distributed throughout the circuits; in laying down such general rules and regulations as shall facilitate all the proceedings of the Association; and in procuring and diffusing such correct information as may tend to promote its objects.

2.—The General Meeting should have power to assign a salary to the General Secretary, or to make such pecuniary compensation to Clerks or others whom it may be necessary to engage, provided the affairs of the Association should increase to an extent to render it indispensable.

3.—Travelling Preachers, having Associations of their own, in which their interests are religiously maintained, and from which all Laymen are as religiously excluded, ought not to be members of this Association. But 1. Inasmuch as the Chapels are settled on the Conference, and as the sole object of this Association is the liquidation of the debts on such Chapels, any communication from the Conference to the General

Meeting ought to claim precedence of all other business, and ought to be immediately referred to the proper Committee, who should at once proceed to consider and report thereon, and the decision of the General Meeting on such report should be immediately communicated by their Secretary to the Conference: and 2, Any Travelling Preacher being a Trustee, and having subscribed to the amount of 10s 6d, should be permitted to attend and vote in the General Meeting, when the case of that particular Chapel for which he is a Trustee shall be under consideration. If influence or interference beyond the above points be allowed to the Members of Conference, they will soon increase that influence, until it shall preponderate, and will not be backward to tell us "Although *you* have raised this fund, it is *our* right to direct its application." Our doctrine is, that Ministers of Religion are not called "*to serve tables*."

4.—All bodies of Trustees which do not come in, and pay the subscription for their Chapel within a given time (say two or three years) should be for ever excluded all benefit of the Association.

5.—Any Trustees borrowing money (other than to replace a sum called in,) and so as to increase the debt on the Chapel, without the consent of the General Meeting, should forfeit all benefit of the Association.

6.—Any Chapel which shall hereafter be built, without the consent of the General Meeting, should not be entitled to relief from the funds of the Association.

7.—Any Chapel built with the consent of the General Meeting, but the cost of which shall exceed the estimate of expense allowed by that Meeting by more than *one-fifth*, should receive no relief from the Association, until the excess shall have been paid off by the Trustees.

#### OBSERVATIONS.

It is not our intention to anticipate objections, nor to dwell on the many obvious advantages of the plan, which we have now laid before our readers. We shall have opportunities of meeting such objections, and referring to such advantages, from time to time, as they arise, or are brought into view.

It cannot be doubted, we think, by any reasonable man, that such a plan, if carried into efficient operation, would fully answer the great end proposed, viz. The redemption of our chapels from excessive and ruinous debt; and the deliverance of those families, who, to the disgrace of Methodism, are left to writh under the grip of the public creditor. It possesses all the advantages of the present misnamed and mismanaged "*General Chapel Fund*," and it avoids all those crying evils, which it has been the object of our former articles to denounce, and the exposure of which has already begun to paralyze the agents of that fund.

The existence of those evils must at all times have tended greatly to weaken and circumscribe the operations, not only of the existing fund, but of all our other institutions. The multitude might be deceived,

Little men, aspiring to petty offices in Methodism, whose only text-book is the *Methodist Magazine*, and whose only authority is the *dictum* of a preacher, might go on blindly abetting the present system; and, in admiration of Mr. Bunting's notion, might deem it their highest felicity, like dutiful Corporals and Sergeants, to obey their Generals with blind devotion. But the moral strength of Methodism does not lie in these men. There is another and a daily increasing class of men, capable of appreciating fully all the advantages of Methodism, and warmly attached to her institutions, but who have ventured to peep over her pales, and have discovered that Methodism is but a section of the Christian Church. These men are not now to learn the *primer* and *reading-made-easy* of Messrs. Watson, Beecham, Bunting, and Jackson. They have brought powerful minds, and extensive general knowledge, to bear upon the institutions of Methodism; and have left these reverend disciplinarians of the nursery themselves far in the rear. In fact, the most intelligent men in Methodism, those who alone can save her from contempt, and uphold her in rank and station with other Christian Churches, have long seen that it is neither for the interests of Methodism nor of Religion, that she should continue to be managed by her Conference, upon principles allied to the papacy, and upon a system resembling that of the close boroughs of England.

The dark and lowering jealousy which has frowned upon every man who dared to open his eyes, or to utter any voice in Methodism, except in accordance with the key-note of the Conference Faction;—the incessant endeavours to prevent the circulation of light, and to check the progress of opinions;—and the contempt and obloquy—what do we say,—the expulsion from office, and direct persecution, of every man who has ventured to profess himself a friend of the Constitution of 1797;—all these things, we say, have not been for the good of Methodism, nor calculated to invigorate and strengthen her institutions. They have been the spirit and policy of a faction of ambitious preachers, designed to secure their power, and to preserve to themselves the good things of Methodism untouched and unexamined. Even the great body of the travelling preachers, deceived as to their true interests, may plod the round of the country circuits and beg their bread, provided certain warm nests are reserved to the faction, and they be permitted, in present comfort, to plot and take chances for a future mitre. The effect has been to produce in Methodism that broad line of distinction between her unordained clergy and her preaching and praying laity; to excite and foster mutual and increasing jealousies; and, at length, to array in direct opposition to the policy and proceedings of the Conference, a great proportion of the intelligence and respectability of the connexion.

From the above Conference Faction will proceed the opposition to our plan; and, we doubt not, it will be as violent and pertinacious as that which the borough-mongers are now making to reform in the Commons' house of parliament. It will proceed, also, upon the

same principles, and be sustained by similar abuse of the public mind. But it must be overcome by the virtue and firmness of those, who wish to see Methodism what it ought to be; for, so long as the existing faction shall be suffered to continue their selfish and miserable policy, Methodism can never lift up her head amongst a nation of free men. She must continue to be regarded with mortifying compassion and indulgence by other churches, as containing some institutions useful to the illiterate poor; but as presenting, on the whole, a system, to which no intelligent man can sacrifice his reason, and no independent man his liberty. She must submit to be viewed as the nursery of servile principles, and of priesthood; and, notwithstanding her acknowledged advantages, she must continue to be looked upon, by every friend of freedom, as ultimately of doubtful benefit to the nation. Her children, as they advance in knowledge and intelligence, must be permitted to go off, and seek, in other churches, a freer circulation, and a purer atmosphere; and they will not be detained by gilded organs, and pompous liturgies. What has not Methodism already suffered from this source? It is true, that "*not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called;*" but yet of these, primitive Christianity could boast of a considerable number, and she carried her conquests even into Cæsar's household. Methodism, also, in the simplicity of her origin, could boast a fair proportion of distinguished names, and of honorable women not a few; and, surely, after the rise of successive generations, she might have expected a proportional increase from amongst her own children. But is this the case? What misgivings,—what pain have we not felt, when, looking down the tables at the quarterly meetings of some of our oldest and most respectable circuits, we have recollected the names of some of those who formerly graced those tables!—Those early and venerated names have disappeared, but where are the children? And by whom have they been replaced? In what quarterly meeting, or in which of our societies, shall we now find, amongst the lay members, men of education and fortune combined, and holding a corresponding rank and influence in society? We know the halting pleas by which this inquiry is met; but the dissenters have such men, why should they shun Methodism? Nay, more; Methodism has actually sent forth numbers of men, of distinguished intelligence and respectability, who are now the grace and proudest ornaments of other churches! To what extent have not the Church of England and the Dissenters been benefitted by that narrow and servile system, which has stripped Methodism of her brightest sons, and driven out her noblest children?—a system which seeks to stop the diffusion of knowledge, and the circulation of opinions; which would stifle the press, and prevent every assembly of the laity, in which a priest shall not be permitted to preside, with full authority, to regulate the discussions and influence the decisions. Let every Methodist reflect that such are the express laws,—the direct enactments of Wesleyan Methodism down to the year 1831,

and let him cease to wonder that she cannot retain, in comparison with other churches, her fair proportion of intelligence and respectability.

Amidst all the anticipated cry against faction and liberalism ;—the cant about “unconstitutional assemblies ;—meetings unknown to Methodism ;—dangerous innovation, &c. &c.” and the wrath and rage of the Conference Faction ;—what is it, after all, that we propose? Can our readers believe that we are hostile to Methodism ; or are capable of wishing to involve her institutions in anarchy and ruin? They know us better. Equally opposed to priestcraft and tyranny on the one hand, and to mob-government and faction on the other, we have taken a middle course, and have made our stand upon the Constitution of 1797. If we have put on our armour, it has been in defence of acknowledged rights :—if we have wielded a powerful weapon, it has been in maintenance of solemn treaties. What, then, is the object of our present plan? It is simply to enable the trustees to manage a fund, avowedly raised for their relief, free from the dictation and control of those who have no direct personal interest, but who have hitherto so grossly mismanaged and abused that fund. Was ever any proposition more reasonable? Can any man in his senses apprehend any danger to Methodism from such an association? Can the bringing together of a representative, from each of the districts, once a year, for such an object, be regarded with suspicion and distrust? Can the most respectable of our trustees, who would be selected on such occasions, men who have given such proofs of their attachment to Methodism, and who are become so heavily responsible for her public debt, contemplate any attack on Methodism? No! If there be any thing in Methodism which can dread the association, which we have recommended, it is something foreign to its genius, and inimical to its best interests. It is the faction, and their policy alone, that would shrink at the prospect of having the broad and stern eye of the public turned towards them. The Conference could have nothing to fear; their constitution is secured in legal form, and could never be invaded by any body of trustees. The chapels also are safe, being settled on the Conference by the trust-deeds. If it were possible to conceive that any body of trustees could wish to interfere with either, they would not have the power; and these two points comprise every thing else that is vital and important to Methodism.

The confidence which it would inspire,—the countenance and support which such an association would afford to the Conference, in difficult and critical times,—and the security which it would give in fact, to all our institutions,—would impart to Methodism a degree of moral strength and stability, of which she stands much in need; and which must be imparted to her, if we would prevent the whole fabric from crumbling to the dust. “Methodism,” it has been remarked,—“the whole series of Methodism, like an inverted cone, is based upon a single point,—the ecclesiastic is every thing, and the people nothing.” It is high time to enlarge this base a little, lest the cone, instead of being

inverted, should lose all balance, and be broken in pieces by a sudden prostration. If, as is the case with Methodism, the superstructure is become vastly extended, it is necessary to enlarge, proportionably, the foundation. And, if the Conference really understood their true interests, they would be the first to hail the formation of such an association. Instead of decrying it with narrow and pitiful jealousy, they would afford it a generous countenance. It would be to them a tower of strength, and a never failing source of protection and defence.

## BIRMINGHAM.

### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,—The value of your spirited publication is daily becoming more and more manifest,—nor is it unusual to hear even the prejudiced Conference man occasionally acknowledge that if the tone and temper with which it has hitherto been conducted continue to characterise its pages, it will prove of great benefit to the connexion. It were vain to deny that those master spirits who, at present, unfortunately rule the destinies of Methodism *fear its truths*. Since its establishment a spirit of caution has shown itself in their counsels, and a desire *not to appear* in the *Circular* will, now and then, escape the lips of these *great men*; yet, notwithstanding the sophistry by which they would make the worse appear the better cause, they have been unable to erase the impression made on a great portion of the Methodist community from the perusal of its powerful pages.—They have endeavoured to circumscribe its circulation, and to some extent they may have succeeded; yet, as well might they attempt to extinguish the source of light as to stay the progress of that spirit of inquiry which is daily becoming more manifest throughout the Societies generally. The time has fully come when we ought to join as with the heart of one man to assert and uphold our constitutional rights; this is the period for making a stand against the encroachments of Conference ;—crush tyranny in the bud, and it will be difficult for it to live. The Conference have but lately commenced operations against the people—every act of oppression is fresh in our memories—and already Mr. B., the head of Conference, has received a check as unexpected as it is likely to prove useful; the language of “*Will not allow it*,” and comparing the Society to a regiment, with its *privates, corporals, serjeants, and GENERALS*, is too tyrannical and degrading to be acquiesced in by the Methodist who possesses one spark of Wesleyan independence. I trust there are preachers who, in Conference assembled, will dare to be honest—who still deprecate the power assumed. Their peculiar situation, at present, prevents their effectually opposing the definition of Methodist law lately introduced; but let them be convinced that both you and the people will support them, and I doubt not we shall see these good men supporting the principles of the Circular both with purse and influence. Communications will not be wanting—the ungenerous policy of the cabinet will be discovered—the faction which now rule *them* and us will be destroyed—and then will your exertions be crowned with glorious success;—those who have ruled in subtlety shall be placed in the situation they deserve, and those

honest friends of the liberal policy of 1795 and 7, who still ornament the connexion, will come forth and rule in righteousness. The march of liberty has commenced in this town; a short time ago there seemed to exist no feeling in opposition to the legislation of B., W., and N.; there has, it is true, been no memorial to Conference on the Leeds affair—no opposition to those acts of Conference which have called forth such spirited remonstrances from other circuits;—yet, the events of the last two years have had their effect, and are slowly, but surely, working. “The schoolmaster is abroad”—information is spreading—the right of private judgment is claimed—the infallibility of Conference is questioned—the principle is established that passive obedience to spiritual tyranny forms no part of Christian duty. It seems a strange infatuation that preachers, among us, should have imagined that the whole connection would remain silent after the spoliation which they commenced at Leeds, and then charge the sufferers with disaffection because they refused to give up privileges which they had always enjoyed; and it is surely worse than childish to charge the people with schism, because division might be the consequence of such conduct. Remove the cause, and the effect will cease. Conference may luxuriate in despotism—it may wrap around it the mantle of tyranny, but death is in its folds, and should it continue its present course, it needs not the spirit of prophecy to foretel that, instead of preserving the robust and healthy body it has formerly done, it will soon exhibit only the mere skeleton of Methodism. Preachers paying more attention to law than to gospel—more anxiety to occupy the throne of power than the valley of humility—more zeal for themselves than for God—and we shall behold that church, which was the glory of all churches, settling down into formality and lukewarmness. Should the preachers continue their hostility to every principle of liberal legislation—should the powerful influence they can command ultimately triumph, (and sometimes I fear it will,) a division will take place, and we must join those who will treat us as friends and *brethren*. There are thousands in the Methodist Society who, like you, cannot abandon the idea that Conference will make restitution, nor suppose the majority of preachers to be so lost to every principle of liberality, justice, and nobleness of feeling, as to do wrong, and continue to justify that wrong merely because *they have done it*. That which is just in an individual, is so when applied to a host;—if to acknowledge an error committed display a properly constituted mind—if it be the duty of one man to make restitution to his wronged neighbour—surely such a line of conduct is equally the duty of a body of men, however numerous. 'Tis contrary to Conference rule, when the people hold private meetings to discuss its enactments, to write against them, or to publish anonymous letters; but if, in spite of rule, the preachers trample on the privileges of the people, the aggrieved party are compelled, however contrary to their wishes, to enter the field by supporting the Circular, and publishing those sentiments which the preachers will not allow to enter the walls of Conference through the local meetings.

Men are recovering from that *blind* devotedness and blameable confidence with which they have hitherto given up themselves to

the direction of their priests;—they now think a little for themselves. There perhaps exists no church, the Roman Catholic excepted, certainly no Protestant church, whose people have placed such unlimited confidence in their preachers as the Methodists; nor is it difficult to discover a palliative for a confidence, productive as it has been of so many evils, and which adds another proof to the list of the folly of giving up our judgment to the direction of others.

Wesley laboured disinterestedly and constantly for the benefit of mankind, and the power he obtained was the willing tribute of a grateful people. He ruled, but he did not *tyrannise*; and, let it be remembered, that those who caused him the severest pangs were the preachers, and when they wished to take the reins he rightly judged when he said “they” (the people) “will not thus submit to any other man.” Pawson, Bramwell, and others, cautioned them of their danger. That supineness in religion—that fondness for power—that desire for clerical distinction, which, in some degree, were exhibited in their time—did, before the bones of those apostolic men were mouldered, break forth in greater magnitude and deformity, and subsequent acts have proclaimed to the people the disposition of the preachers to reduce them to mere cyphers, except in raising the funds. Let leaders, local preachers, and trustees, firmly hold the power vested in them by the constitution of 1795 and 7, and all will yet be well. The Society in this town participates the general disposition to return to former simplicity,—the chapel debts and circuit expenditure are bringing us to our senses. The deficiency in the circuit receipts for some time has been about £15 per quarter, and at the September Quarterly Meeting a circuit debt of about £130 had accumulated!—the circuit stewards refused to advance further, and extraordinary means were immediately adopted to raise the amount; this was nearly accomplished at the December Quarterly Meeting. This last appeal to the people, already drained past endurance, did great mischief; the preachers acknowledged the injury, and readily agreed to the formation of a financial committee, to consider the ways and means for future operations. Some persons were for selling a chapel, others for the preachers being reduced in number, but nothing certain was decided: the next Quarterly Meeting will develop the plan of the financial committee. One thing, however, is certain, that if four *married* preachers are continued, extraordinary means must be employed to support them. I understand there are many circuits which find it very difficult to provide for their expenditure; many reasons are given by the preachers for this falling off in contributions; but the great reason is, that the bond between preachers and people is weakened, and not until the Conference make restitution to the injured—treat their supporters as friends and *brethren*, and deal out justice to preacher and member with an impartial hand—will that peace and unanimity be restored, which for so many years formed so delightful characteristics of the Methodist Societies.

I am, gentlemen, yours, affectionately,

AN OLD METHODIST.

Birmingham, March, 1831.

THE METHODIST BOOK COMMITTEE AND THE  
"CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE" NEWSPAPER.

It would appear from "The Christian Advocate" of the 2d inst. that the proprietor of that paper has given umbrage to several high personages in Methodism, denominated the Book Committee. To what cause this hostility is attributable, we know not, as the paper in question, as far as we have noticed the contents of its columns, appears to us to have advocated the cause of the high Conference party,—to use the words of the editor, "to have adapted itself to their wants and wishes," and to be, indeed, just such a paper as that faction would wish to circulate through the connexion: how it comes to pass that the London preachers and other influential friends of Methodism have thought proper to denounce it by advertisement, we are at a loss to divine, except it be that they entertain fears of its interference with the profits of the magazine.

The Book Committee, from what motive we will not stop to inquire, have caused the following advertisement to be inserted on the covers of the Methodist and Evangelical Magazines, and in the "Times" and "Record" newspapers.

"WESLEYAN-METHODISTS.—The reference made to the Wesleyan-Methodists in some of the advertisements of THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER having led many persons to conclude that it is the property of that religious body, and published under their patronage, the public are hereby informed, that the said Newspaper is a merely private concern, without any sanction whatever beyond that of the individuals who may choose to support it. Signed by order of the Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Committee.

"JOHN MASON.

"14, City-road, London, April 4, 1831."

The above advertisement produced a counter one from the editor, by way of reply, in which he declares his conviction, that the object of the Book Committee in the advertisement was to impugn him in having represented his paper as "the property of the Wesleyan Methodists, and published under their patronage," which statement he declares to be "*as false as it is specious and malicious*," and then gives several extracts from different numbers of the paper, to shew that he has uniformly, when occasion seemed to require it, asserted that the "preachers are in no way connected with the publication, but that it is altogether the concern of private individuals." The editor then asks "whether he has not studiously sought from time to time, in the most open and positive manner, to disabuse the public mind; and whether he has given the Book Committee any grounds for such insinuations as are conveyed through their advertisement?" and, "Whether such conduct on the part of the Committee can be called either honourable or christian?"

The editor complains also of the conduct of the said Committee, in refusing his counter advertisement insertion on the cover of the Methodist Magazine; but it sometimes happens that the measure we mete to others is meted to us again, and perhaps the proprietor of the paper in question will have no great difficulty in calling to mind his having refused insertion in his columns of an advertisement of this publication.

The editor, after some other remarks, then says "Our subscribers who have regularly examined our columns, will judge, then, how far we merited the Book Committee's unfriendly disclaimer. We think they can bear testimony, that so far from our misrepresenting this paper, or even conniving at misrepresentations of others respecting it, we have employed language far more strong and explicit than any employed by our objectors, though dictated, we trust, by a better spirit, and by higher motives. We have for nearly eighteen months passed by their covert attacks and indirect attempts to put down this paper. Conscious, however, of no motive more powerful than a wish to promote the interests of the Wesleyan Methodists, and believing that by so doing we should be accessory to the advancement of true piety, we resolved to pursue the path we had marked out for ourselves, and through evil as well as good report, we have continued to advocate the same principles, and to show some attachment to the constitution of Methodism, which we professed in the commencement of our career. To have swerved from this course, through any petty hostility or envious jealousy, would have betrayed a dereliction of principle which, however it may be applicable to others, will, we hope, never characterise this Journal."

"Upon the whole, we must be candid, and tell our patrons and friends the judgment to which we have arrived, and the opinion we have at length been forced to form. After attentively watching the process of this persecution, and endeavouring to trace it to its source, as well as listening to the sentiments which have been expressed by others, we firmly believe it to arise from an apprehension that this paper is likely to interfere with the advertisements and the sale of the Methodist Magazine; and this idea, however erroneous, may perhaps be strengthened by the fact, that that respectable periodical CONTINUES TO DECREASE IN CIRCULATION."

We should not have deemed the squabbles of the parties alluded to worthy our notice, had it not been that the proprietor of the "Christian Advocate," who is the son of a Methodist travelling preacher, (one of the active agents in the Leeds affair, being at that time president of the Conference,) is one of those gentlemen who advocate the propriety of the existing state of things in the Methodist body, and against whose opinions the "Circular" has ever waged the most uncompromising war.

There is also another feature in this business which has caused us thus to notice it, it is the fact of the paper alluded to bearing an advertisement of approval and recommendation signed by upwards of eighty travelling preachers in the country circuits,—thus giving to the whole the appearance of "a house divided against itself." We suspect, however, that the preachers who have had the temerity thus to attach their signatures to this advertisement will have to endure a pretty sound flagellation from the platform men at the next Conference.

We have good reason for believing that there exists a strong jealousy on the part of the country preachers against the London Committees and official men, and that the missionary men will not again for some time be able to place their secretaries and nominees in the chair of the Conference.

## MR. BEECHAM'S ESSAY.

A short time ago there appeared a very able pamphlet, entitled "Strictures on Mr. Beecham's Essay on the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism," and believing that its circulation has not been so extensive in the Methodist body as its merits appear to us to require, we have resolved to furnish our readers with its contents; and, although some of our friends may be of opinion that we have already bestowed as much of our attention upon this gentleman as the circumstances of the case called for, we are nevertheless of opinion that the "Strictures" will be read with interest by the friends of the "Circular."—EDITS.

## STRICTURES, &amp;c.

"The avowed object of this writer is to " vindicate Methodism," not in its original state, as constituted by Mr. Wesley, but " in its present form," with all its recent modifications and improvements; its essential and fundamental principle being invariably, That all the societies in that connexion are and were originally placed under the supreme control of Conference; that all the laws and regulations for the government of the whole body emanate from that source, and that the people have no independent rights, or rights of any kind, but what are conceded by authority of Conference.—This Mr. Beecham assures us is the very stratum of Methodism.

"In proof of this he appeals to the minutes of Conference in 1763, which determine that the local assemblies have "no directing or controuling power in spiritual affairs, for they are placed exclusively in the hands of circuit preachers. A leaders' meeting have no voice in admitting or excluding a member of society, or one of their own fraternity; neither can they interfere in the appointment or removal of stewards or any other officer, or have any share in the management of public worship; all these are vested in the superintendent by authority of Conference." Instead of concealing the prostrate condition of Methodism, this dutiful son, not ashamed of its nakedness, proceeds to inform us that so far from the local officers being allowed to exercise any degree of authority, "the leaders themselves were directed to sit in silence (in awful silence no doubt) on their assembling together, until the preacher entered the room; and during the meeting they were not allowed to speak a single word, except in answer to a question from the preacher or steward."

(To be continued.)

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We cannot insert any anonymous communication respecting the Oswestry Chapel. There must surely be some mistake, as it is hardly possible that so small a building could be £1400 in debt! If, however, such a statement be found to correspond with the fact of the case, and can be authenticated by the signatures of two respectable persons, we shall have no hesitation in giving such communication insertion in our columns.

A correspondent inquires, "How many years it is, since the Trust Accounts of Leeds-street Chapel were made up and audited?" We confess our inability to answer this query, as such matters are seldom heard of, until an application be made to the generosity of the Society to wipe off some enormous debt.

We can confidently assure our correspondent "JARUS" that there is no truth in the report he alludes to. It is not at all probable that the "General" will be President of the ensuing Conference. We rather opine that Dr. Clarke will be elected to that honour, for the *fourth* time.

Our correspondent "G" alludes to some disagreement, which, he says, exists between one or more of the Liverpool Methodist Day School Committees and the Preachers, relative to their alleged inattention to the customary friendly and pastoral visitations, with which the schools have, in time past, been favoured. We do not profess to be in possession of the facts of the case, and can not, therefore, vouch for the truth of the statement of our correspondent; but, we believe that it is in substance correct.

We should feel obliged if any of our correspondents could inform us, in how many instances, in the two Liverpool circuits, the Rule has been departed from, which requires all trustees of Methodist Chapels to be members of the Society.

We feel sorry that the communication, signed "A Z," is not more clear and explicit, as the subject on which it treats is truly important; yet, for the reason assigned, we do not feel at liberty to insert it. We hope that the Leaders' Meetings will be firm, in resisting all attempts at innovation on the customary system of receiving new leaders. The superintendent, as the party nominating, ought certainly to be satisfied as to the eligibility and suitability of the party to be nominated; and we see no reason why this cannot be properly done by the superintendent proposing such questions, as he may deem necessary, in the presence of the leaders assembled. We know that such a plan had used to be acted upon in Liverpool, and we foresee great evil in departing from it, especially in the present day, when the object of the preachers is to prevent any accession of truly independent men to the lists of leaders; and the system of "private interview," is very favourable to such object, as it gives the preacher an admirable opportunity of *testing* the individual as to the *soundness* of his views and principles, i.e. whether he be a true believer in the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance to the clerical "powers that be." We hope that our friends, the leaders, will be on the alert, and guard this point.

"EZRA" is received, and the inclosure safe at hand. We tender our best thanks.

We are happy to acknowledge further contributions from

First London West Circuit .....	£1
Second ditto .....	1
First London South .....	5
Second ditto .....	1
Deptford .....	1

Erratum in our last, page 125, 2d column, 2d line, for "absolution" read "absolutism."

Published the last day of every month by HARDING, 3, Paternoster-row, London, and WORRALL and TAYLOR, Clarendon-buildings, Liverpool; to whom Communications for the Errors may be addressed, *post paid*.

# The Circular

TO

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XVIII.

30TH JUNE, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

It was observed by the learned Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, that "the great lesson which every sect, and every individual of every sect, ought to learn from the History of the Church is MODERATION."—"As the Church rose in rank, it lost that perfect equality amongst its members, which formed the very essence of its original and best character."—*History of the Church.*

It is admitted, that, during the first two centuries, the Christian Church was more pure, more zealous, and more devoted, than at any subsequent period; and this is, in a great degree, attributable to the comparative poverty of its members, and to the equality of their condition. While comparatively poor, the Church was pure in its affections and in its worship; as it associated with the higher classes, and became possessed of secular wealth and influence, useless rites and ceremonies were introduced, which, as they prevailed, corrupted the primitive simplicity of its worship, and induced a decay of genuine piety. The Church of Christ has never been benefitted by its association with the rich and worldly. It is natural to the rich and great to entertain the opinion, that their wealth and secular importance should give them an influence above that of their poorer, though, perhaps, more pious and intelligent brethren; an opinion which, in its operation, invariably produces an expectation of power and rule, even in the Church of God, one of whose precepts is "Let him that would be greatest among you be your minister," or servant, and whose founder was emphatically the servant of all. These sentiments of the rich, then, are at utter variance with that unity and brotherhood which should ever be found in the Church, and which cannot exist in association with clashing interests, and a desire on the part of the few to assume lordship and authority over the body of its members.

For many years after its commencement, Methodism was principally confined to the humbler ranks of society; and, during this period, it rapidly increased in numbers and in piety, even in the face of opposition, persecution, and hatred the most violent. The preachers were affectionate and laborious,—men of one object,

and that object, not the aggrandizement of themselves, but the salvation of souls.—The people followed ardently in their track,—one spirit animated the whole body, and the powers of darkness fell before them, as the Philistines when assailed by "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Methodism in its progress occasionally found its way amongst the more respectable classes of society, and persons of some wealth and consequence were found amongst its professed members; these were hailed by the poorer members as trophies of the conquests of revived religion. Their liberality in affording pecuniary help was rewarded by their being introduced into offices of trust and honor, and their counsel was sought on all matters relating to the welfare of the Society: thus they soon rose to importance, and so far there was nothing to be regretted. But the misfortune to Methodism, as to the primitive church, was, that these more respectable persons soon manifested a desire to make the religion they professed, like themselves, more respectable. With this view they began to make their places of worship more suited to the higher orders of society; chapels more inviting and accommodating were built; the meeting houses, once plain and humble, unadorned except by the presence of Him whose beauty filled the ancient temple, gave place to elegant and costly erections, built to gratify the taste of the multitude, and to form an arena on which the embellishments of oratory and the graces of elocutionary action might be exhibited, for the admiration of those, whose object in hearing was not to learn the practical and humbling doctrine of the Cross, but to soothe the morbid taste of an unsanctified heart.

Extensive places of worship, and fashionable preachers, required that the residences of the preachers and their furniture should be of the same nature, and the wheels of the Society thus became clogged with a heavy debt, which racked the minds of the responsible parties, and compelled an almost constant labour of begging and borrowing to meet the interest of the

sums expended. In all this the mistaken friends of Methodism seemed not to consider, that in raising the preachers to the same level as themselves, and causing them to ascend the scale of worldly respectability, they not only elevated them above the proper station which they were designed to fill, and in which they were most useful, but they also took them completely out of the sphere of the generality of their own people; thus forming an effectual separation between them;—they associated less, they felt less of a common interest, and a coldness and indifference resulted, highly detrimental to both. We would not be understood to assert that this is the state of things in every circuit, but in our large towns it generally prevails.

The conformity to the world, which we have here attempted to describe, was followed by a conformity, if possible, more injurious. Augmentations of the Society were looked for, principally by persons who, as not being dissenters, were termed church people; and these persons were therefore presumed to be attached to that form of worship which prevails in the establishment. To induce this class of persons to frequent Methodist Chapels, and to make the transition the more easy, and of course less observable, (as no material difference existed in point of doctrine) the Church Liturgy was introduced in a few places,—to this succeeded organs in many places, where, in the purer periods of Methodist history, the commanding harmony of a whole congregation praising and blessing God was the only music sought. Congregational singing, which was so legitimately attractive to outward hearers, and so reviving to the pious, was thus nearly destroyed, and singing in the houses of the members, around their respective family altars, was greatly lessened. In other places, where the favourite instrument was not introduced, the singing was spoiled by variations more suited to the opera than the worship of God. In the dress of the worshippers generally, and the members of society in particular, a similar conformity to the world by degrees crept in, until, from being distinguished for plainness and neatness of apparel, the congregations are adorned in all the diversity of fashion.

These innovations were not effected without great and continued opposition from the most spiritual part of the Societies, and those who promoted them could only effect their object by resorting to unworthy, and frequently unlawful, artifices; and wherever they have succeeded, their deleterious effects are visible in the decline of that high tone of religious feeling, so peculiarly the glory of genuine and original Methodism.

It is not in the nature of religion to associate with the world, without, in a greater or less degree, partaking of its spirit, and, by prolonged association, it will approximate in an accelerated ratio, until, to use the homely but forcible language of Scripture, "the sow that was washed returns to her wallowing in the mire."

We consider the controversy originating in the dark transactions of the Leeds Special District Meeting, so called, as one of the evils resulting from the undue

influence of rich men, and the criminal subserviency of the preachers in following their worldly policy. Had Methodism remained in its primitive purity, that lovely church had never been rent asunder; the unhappy results in this and other circuits would have been prevented; and the peace of the whole Society happily preserved. How true is it that the beginning of strife is like the letting out of water; and will not the culpability rest with those who were the first to stir up strife by unrighteous and unscriptural aggression; and who, in the pride and haughtiness of their hearts, are the last to take a step towards any reconciliation, but continue to brand all who differ from them with every epithet that can debase the Christian name? "Incendiary," "radical," "disturber of the Society's peace," are among their milder terms of reproach; and these are used by the very persons who should, by scriptural rule, take all the criminality upon themselves! But we are not a little comforted in the thought, that it is no new thing for those who contend for popular rights to be charged with rebellion and falsehood, and every thing that is base; witness the sufferers in every church reform from the beginning down to the cry against the first professors of Methodism. We are content to wear titles so opprobriously bestowed, as honorable badges, which class us among the Luthers and Wesleys of the age! The "Circular," which we have the honor of conducting, is, we trust, a proof that we are not acting like common croakers, who are everlastingly complaining that we are hastening to decay, but never institute any means of checking the evils they see; we have placed ourselves in the breach as a rallying point for all who love the good old cause, and by persevering in our exertions, seconded, as we are, by the pious and intelligent portion of the Methodist community, the hydra-headed monster of conference-corruption, will, we trust, give way, and eventually sink under the force of truth.

This is the age of reform, every institution is feeling its renovating power, even those deemed most sacred and most ancient are giving up their new, extraneous, and injurious redundancies; as a statue which has received, from the hand of some rustic artisan, coat after coat of many colours, by which its delicate touches are concealed, and its fine proportions disfigured, when cleansed of its excrescences, again exhibits marks of the well known hand of an Appelles or a Michael Angelo! And why shall not the spirit of reform penetrate even to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference? Is there anything in the genius of our people which opposes itself to improvement of any kind? On the contrary, are they not among the foremost in their respective walks of usefulness, whether in the literary, mechanical, or philosophic circles? Why then, we inquire, are they to be the last upon whom the rising luminary of a new reformation shall shed forth its reanimating rays? Only let them be fully apprised of the state in which they are placed,—of the tyranny and misrule under which their brethren have suffered, and of which they themselves may be

the next victims,—tell them that no sect of Christians is content to live under so arbitrary a system of church government,—that even the tardy-paced Church of England, encumbered as it is with liturgies, and ceremonies, and forms, will soon outstrip them in the race of improvement,—make them sensible that it is in their power to restore Methodism to all the excellencies it ever possessed, that to effect this they have only to say to the Conference “*reform yourselves or we will reform you,*” and their voice will then be heard and obeyed!!

We are not without expectation that this most desirable result may be effected, if it be steadily and temperately, yet vigorously pursued, and for this end let us all unite in fervent prayer that the Lord may hasten the time.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

Your examination of, and observations upon, the state of the Methodist Chapel Fund, in Nos. 10, 16, and 17, of the Circular, appears to me deserving of prompt attention by every one in our religious community; I mean, of course, by every one who has at heart the glory of God and the everlasting good of his fellow creatures.

It is difficult to account for so much mismanagement as is exhibited in this business on any other principle than, that the great bulk of our people pay their money to this or that fund on the same ground as they pay the tax-gatherer, and that is—to get rid of his importunity. There is, however, another feeling probably superadded to this in the breasts of many. They recollect former days, when the preachers were labourers among them, watched over them, called at their houses, without being invited to splendid dinners, and prayed for them: they look back with pleasing recollection upon the time when there was an *identity of interest* between the pastor and his flock, when the pastor said, and said truly and sincerely, “*we seek not yours, but you.*” O, sirs! where shall we now find the zeal, disinterestedness, and faithfulness of former days? Well did Wesley, with a prophetic eye, exclaim

“Whither shall I wander now to find  
The successors they left behind?  
The faithful, whom we seek in vain,  
Are ‘minished from the sons of men.”

Is this a true picture, or an exaggeration of the present state of things among us? Is the state of moral feeling in our congregations so deteriorated that our preachers, in many of our circuits, dare not tell the truth? Whence has this evil arisen? Is it imputable to ministers, or to hearers; or, are both partakers of the evil? Is it not lamentable to think, that with all the machinery of our system at work, we have no increase, or, at least, none of any consequence in any part of the kingdom? Nay, in some places, with certain advantages on our side, we have actually retrograded—we have diminished in number!

There is a cause; there must be a cause for this defect. The sooner we look the mischief in the face and the sooner it will be got rid of. Riches, and honours, and luxury, have enervated both ministers and people. It is well observed by Mr. Beverley, in

his pamphlet on the corrupt state of the Church of England, “that wealth and titles have been the ruin of the establishment,” (I quote from memory) and, “that if the followers of Mr. Wesley, or any other sect, come under the weight of wealth and titles, they will be destroyed by it.” Who can lay his hand to his heart and say, this is going too far?

I intend, Gentlemen, with your permission, to examine the state of several of our chapels; I propose to point out their defective management from the commencement: when I have done this, I shall avail myself of your useful remarks and advice, with a view to stem the torrent of mischief which has accrued from bringing together, and in immediate contact, our preachers and so many proud, overbearing, and, I fear, ungodly men;—men who might, with tolerable consistency, have been building cathedrals, and filling them with organs and other trumpery, but who are quite out of their proper sphere in meddling with Wesleyan Methodism.

But, say you, and you say truly, our preachers, very many of our preachers, encourage this; they had their little snug meetings in this corner and in that, and they think that we ought to improve with the spirit of the age in external matters; besides, there is the credit at Conference of having accomplished some great object—of having overcome some special difficulty, which could never be effected before. This is not hypothesis, it has passed under our observation. The preachers and their wealthy friends, aided by the inconsiderate, pliant, “*but the sound part of our people,*” have accomplished things which have brought sorrow and all but ruin on very many who were, in their first engagements, wholly unconscious of their responsibility!

In quoting Mr. Beverley’s clever pamphlet above, I ought to have added to their credit, that *our* preachers’ right hand men are earnestly recommending the work. For what purpose? No doubt, the best purpose,—to expose error and corruption. Little do some imagine, that much of the contents of that pamphlet will apply to Methodism as well as to the Established Church.

Before I enter into certain details, I cannot resist the opportunity which now presents itself, to thank you, Christian Editors, for the faithful manner in which you have protested against and plainly exposed the unseemly, I might add, deadly excrescences which have grown upon and injured the progress of the most extraordinary system, unconnected with the state, that has ever appeared in the world. Truly have you said, in your 13th Number, that “Methodism is an extraordinary system; that its rise, progress, and proceedings may be termed extraordinary;” and equally true did you remark in the same article, after enumerating its beautiful machinery, and shewing its suitability, that in it “employment can be found adapted to the greatest and the least capacity; that there need be no idle persons, none but what may in some way or other, according to the talent which God has given, be serving their generation, and lessening the amount of evil which is in the world.”

Some people imagine themselves devout because they say their prayers; while others keep their names on the books of the society, pay their money liberally, entertain splendidly, and then conclude that all is done on their part. Is this christianity? Is this religion? No: christianity dwells in the heart. “It directs its influence to

the inmost recesses of the soul." It regards the motive of an action rather than the action itself, and considers a crime only meditated as if it had been actually committed. It goes to the bottom,—the spring, the foundation of all our conceptions, and requiring the renovation of the heart, it provides in the most effectual manner for the future reformation of the life. It does not consist in mere *giving* to and *domineering* over the church of Christ, *but in loving one another*, as Mr. Wesley convincingly speaks in his "Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion"—"No matter," says he, "how splendid our chapels may be, or how numerous and respectable our congregations; without **LOVE** to God and love to man, all our pretensions and professions are 'as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.'" Love is the badge of our discipleship. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." While I am seriously penning this epistle I examine myself, I look about me; methinks I hear some one say, such an one is very liberal, and such a person is a capital manager; we cannot do better than let such men conduct our affairs; if we are short of pence they will raise the wind to make every thing look prosperous at our district meeting: we must put up with their non-attendance at our class and other meetings, and little foibles and failings; we must pass by their aptness to tyrannise a bit; for, notwithstanding these trifling defects, they are of great use, and stand by the ship. They countenance our preachers in all their designs, and, of course, our preachers must countenance them. They never read any books, or encourage any publication but what has the infallible stamp of the Methodist book-room upon them. As for your "Circular," or any other work that has a tendency to investigate our ecclesiastical affairs, that ventures to point out what is wrong, and call our attention to first principles, such as we have just touched upon, they would anathematize such a work, stigmatize its conductors, and blast their fair fame, at a rate that would suit the bigotry of the followers of Mahomet! Is this portrait over coloured? Am I not within the mark? I maintain, Gentlemen, that a morose, churlish, and unsocial christian is a contradiction in terms.

A society, the individuals of which do not love one another, cannot be a society of the disciples of Jesus Christ. If, when a man has given away a small portion of his superfluity to the poor, or contributed a round sum towards a chapel debt, he considers himself as having satisfied the demands of his Maker, what a mistake!

It was not thus with the primitive Christians, with the Methodists in Mr. Wesley's time, and in our early days. All the members of that body were closely united by the bonds of fraternal love, and the most pure and active benevolence. If the same spirit and energy which characterised them had continued in operation to this day, what might not our wonderful system have effected? If we take the ratio during the first fifty years, we might expect that the latter half century would see its numbers, its real converts, increased tenfold. O happy Britain! had this blessing rested upon thee! During the former period we know that our members were actuated by one principle. The religion of all appeared to consist in visiting the "fatherless and widows in their afflictions," and in keeping "themselves unspotted from the world."

Let us not despair: the same state of things is yet attainable. If the preachers were now to admit that their conduct at Leeds was *unconstitutional*: if they were, for peace sake and for Christ's sake, to adhere to the plan of pacification and concessions of 1797, and acknowledge their validity from this time forth: if they were to return to first principles, and imitate their Lord and master, by "going about doing good," I am persuaded that a glorious change would be instantly visible in our societies. Our people would hail the change as the work of heaven, and all the bad feeling that now prevails would speedily disappear. Under the dominion of the Gospel, thus revived, envy, pride, and jealousy, would give way to the most enlarged benevolence, and this not only amongst ourselves, but among all the followers of Christ:—man would know nothing in man but a *friend* and *brother*. Well might the royal prophet, with his eyes fixed upon the people of God, break forth into that exulting language, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, a people *saved by the Lord*."

Excuse this digression. I hope to take up the subject of our chapels in this town, and perhaps some others, in my next communication.

I remain,

Gentlemen,

Yours, respectfully,

TERTIUS.

*Liverpool, June, 1831.*

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

To contend for the liberty, as well as for the faith, of the Gospel,—that faith which was once delivered to the saints,—is, I apprehend, the duty and the privilege of every true Christian; a duty and privilege, in the discharge and employment of which, they will studiously separate all matters of private judgment and private interest; and, while the magnanimity of their conduct bears witness for them, that they are not ashamed of avowing their cordial attachment to the primitive simplicity of the Church of God, and their utter abhorrence of all human addition to it, the amiableness of their tempers shall display the excellence of that knowledge, which is essential to the first dawn of happiness, and the least degree of evangelical usefulness. I may also add, that, in proportion as they abound in this wisdom, they will exert themselves in every possible way to promote the glory of their Saviour, treating with proper contempt the frowns of those, who would, if they had power, put an extinguisher on their Christian valour. If they are honored with a public character in the Church of Jesus, they do not shun to declare his whole counsel;—they keep back no truth through fear of offending;—they never palliate an evil with a view to please.

You will excuse me, gentlemen, if I, in perfect sincerity, apply the last remark to you. I never read a number of your Journal without admiring your intrepidity, integrity, and ability; and sure I am, that, if the Methodist body of Christians were to peruse your luminous pages, they would learn many important lessons,—

THEY WOULD LEARN TO THINK AND JUDGE FOR THEMSELVES: (this axiom, I hold to be greatly neglected in the religious world, and especially in the Methodist connexion) they would imitate the noble Bereans,—they would investigate what they heard, what they saw, and what they read. I cannot but think that this is a great source of error in doctrine, and in practice, among us. We are too apt to take things by hearsay. We learn by *listening*, rather than by *inquiring*. In this respect, as well as in some others to which I shall advert hereafter, we are too prone to imitate the Roman Catholics, whose conduct is continually held up to our view, as glaringly absurd and ridiculous, in receiving every thing at the hand, and bowing at the nod, of their priests, without once inquiring “whether these things are so.” We frequently hear our preachers declare from the pulpit how weak and how wicked the followers of the Pope are, in yielding their understandings to their teachers,—in yielding implicit faith, and implicit obedience, to their unscriptural dogmas, to their pretended oracles.

It may not be irrelevant to remark here, that *implicit faith* is that by which we take up any system or opinion of another without examination. This has been one of the chief sources of ignorance and error in the Church of Rome. The divines of that community teach, “That we are to observe, not how the Church proves any thing, but what she says. That the will of God is, that we should believe and confide in his ministers in the same manner as himself.” Cardinal Toletus, in his instructions to priests, asserts, “That if a rustic believes his bishop proposing an heretical tenet for an article of faith, such belief is meritorious.” Cardinal Cusanus tells us, “That irrational obedience is the most consummate and perfect obedience, when we obey without attending to reason, as a beast obeys his driver.” In an epistle to the Bohemians he has these words: “I assert, that there are no precepts of Christ but those which are received as such by the Church.” (Meaning the Church of Rome.) “When the Church changes her judgment, God changes his judgment likewise.” What madness! What blasphemy! For a church to demand belief of what she teaches, and a submission to what she enjoins, merely upon her assumed authority, must appear to unprejudiced minds the height of unreasonableness and spiritual despotism. I heartily wish, and I think, gentlemen, that you will concur with me in that wish, that this doctrine had been confined to this church; but, alas! it has been too prevalent, to a certain extent, in other communities. I shall say more on this subject anon. “A theological system,” says Dr. Jortin, “is too often no more than a temple consecrated to implicit faith; and he who enters there to worship, instead of leaving his shoes, after the eastern manner, must leave his understanding at the door, and it will be well if he find it when he comes out again.”

Another subject, closely connected with the error under consideration, presents itself this moment to my view, and that is, *infallibility*, or something nearly allied to it, for which many foolishly contend. *Infallibility* is the quality of not being subject to be deceived or mistaken. This, of course, applies to doctrine and discipline. It is pretty well known that the infallibility of the church of Rome has been, and is to this day, one of the great controversies between the protestants and papists. By this infal-

libility it is understood, that she cannot at any time cease to be orthodox in her doctrine, or erroneous in her discipline; but, that she is constituted, by divine authority, the judge of all controversies of religion, and that all Christians (in her community?) are obliged to acquiesce in her decisions. This is the chain which keeps its members fast bound to its communion;—the charm which retains them within its magic circle;—the opiate which lays asleep all their doubts and difficulties;—it is, likewise, the magnet which attracts the desultory and unstable in other persuasions, within the sphere of popery,—the foundation of its whole superstructure,—the cement of all its parts,—and its fence and fortress against all inroads and attacks. Under the idea of this *infallibility*, the church of Rome claims: 1. To determine what books are and what are not to be read by its members: 2. To communicate authority to Scripture, and fix the sense to each passage, which all Christians are submissively to receive: 3. To decree, as necessary to salvation, whatever she judges so, although not contained in Scripture: 4. To decide all controversies respecting matters of faith: and we may add, lastly, To adapt her laws, and mode of discipline, to the times; and to apply her approval or censure to the circumstances of each case, according to the judgment of her council.

These, gentlemen, are the claims to which the church of Rome pretends, but which I shall not here attempt to refute; because any man, with the Bible in his hand, and a little common-sense in his head, will easily see that they are all founded upon ignorance, superstition, and error.

The tree is known by its fruit. Bad councils produce bad practice. What can be expected from such sickening, glaring, tyrannising sentiments, as we have just cited, but the exercise of all practice that is opposed to brotherly love and forbearance? In a word, what can be expected but *persecution*? Now, persecution does not consist merely in inflicting fines and imprisonments;—it also signifies, shunning the company of a brother who differs from us,—blasting his character,—injuring his circumstances, &c. That this is not only an unlawful, but an unchristian conduct, must appear plain to every one, who possesses the least degree of thought or of feeling. “To banish, plunder, and burn men for religion,” says the shrewd Jortin, whom I have already quoted, “is not the Gospel of Christ; it is the Gospel of the Devil. Where persecution begins, christianity ends. Christ never used any thing that looked like force or violence, except once; and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in.” We know the origin of it to be from the prince of darkness, who began the dreadful practice in the first family on earth; and who, more or less, by his agents, has been carrying on the same work ever since, and that almost among all denominations of churches and societies.

I may, therefore, assert, that, in reviewing the annals of religion in general, and the history of christianity in particular, a liberal minded man will feel himself but little disposed to assume an air of triumph, and to exult over the inferior part of the creation, who are able to raise their eyes to no higher a master than man. He will be much more inclined to hang his head and blush. Under the sacred name of religion, errors, the most absurd, have

been promulgated, and conduct, the most pernicious, has been sanctioned. Zeal for God and the interests of the church, has been the signal of destruction to thousands,—the destruction, at least, of their peace of mind and of their usefulness. Thanks to our tolerant laws, they could go no further than this at Leeds, at Sheffield, at Bristol, and elsewhere. Thus have we seen, that the pretended followers of the meek, humble, and benevolent Jesus, have vainly imagined they were serving God, by trampling upon the rights, invading the property, and sacrificing the liberties, of their fellow Christians.

Before I proceed to apply the preceding observations, and to institute certain comparisons between the Romish clergy and some other clergy in our day and in our land, I may take leave to lay before your readers, as well as before the Leeds legislators, prosecutors, and executioners, the opinion of the amiable and peaceable Dr. Doddridge on this subject. "Persecution, for conscience sake, is every way inconsistent. Because, 1. It is founded on an absurd supposition that one man has a right to judge for another in matters of religion. 2. It is evidently opposite to that fundamental principle of morality, that we should do to others as we should reasonably desire they should do to us. 3. It is by no means calculated to answer the end which its patrons profess to intend by it. 4. It evidently tends to produce a great deal of mischief and confusion in the world."

Referring to my next,

I am, gentlemen,  
Yours, &c.

CYRUS.

#### STRICTURES ON MR. BEECHAM'S ESSAY.

*Continued from page 136.*

In the conference of 1771 it was ordained, "that a leader has authority only to meet his class, and receive their contributions; that an assembly of leaders are only to show their class-papers to the preachers, and deliver the money collected to the stewards. They have no authority to restrain an irregular preacher, to displace a leader, or expel any one from society: all these things are confided to the assistant preacher. They are not permitted to regulate the temporal or spiritual concerns of the society, neither the one nor the other." A pretty dilemma for the primitive Methodists! Nevertheless, though they had nothing to do with the laws but to obey them, they were to have the peculiar privilege of providing all the funds; and if they could but furnish the money, wisdom would elsewhere be found to direct its application.

It was impossible that things could long continue in such a state, without producing great dissatisfaction; for, however willing the people might be to submit to the management of Mr. Wesley and those immediately about him, it would be far otherwise when the government passed into other hands. A system which deprived them of all their rights, and transferred them to a spiritual aristocracy, could have no claim to their admiration; sooner or later it would provoke inquiry, if not a feeling of resentment for

the degradation it had inflicted. The whole series of Methodism, like an inverted cone, is based upon a single point—the ecclesiastic is every thing, and the people nothing; the machinery is all working above, grinding them to powder. According to Mr. Wesley's account, as stated by this writer, "the wheels regularly stand thus: first the assistant or superintendent, next the local preachers, then the stewards, the leaders, and the people." The wheels however could not be expected to "stand" long in this position, without being in danger of standing still; an accidental contact with some in the factory, producing serious mischief, would bring on a regular inquest, and a deodand would be demanded. Mr. Beecham, indeed, acknowledges that the machinery did not work so well as could have been wished, and that it needed some alteration or repair; and soon after the decease of Mr. Wesley, loud complaints were heard among the people, whose remonstrances did not fail to agitate the whole connexion. The conference was at length induced to make some concessions in 1795, and also in 97, which, though they did not amount to a full surrender of the rights claimed by the people, proved an alleviation of their bondage.

In examining these concessions, Mr. Beecham is anxious the people should know what obligations they are under to their spiritual rulers, and how large the boon their generosity has conferred; he never dreams that any encroachment was or could at any time be made on their rights and privileges, by those who had seated themselves on the throne of Methodism; every concession is perfectly free and gratuitous. A change was however introduced into the general discipline, which in some measure reduced its exorbitancy. Instead of the superintendent minister having the sole power of receiving and expelling members on his own authority, he can now do neither without consent of a leaders' meeting; nor can leaders or stewards be henceforth appointed or removed, without the concurrence of the class leaders. The circuit stewards also are allowed to share in the pecuniary transactions of the society, and form a part of the various committees of finance, from which they were formerly excluded. All these are stated as concessions made by "the liberality of conference:" yet, in the hands of this writer, the whole is frittered down to a mere permission for the local officers and members to be consulted on certain occasions, without allowing them any direct or effective vote on the subject brought before them;—a sort of mock committee, whose determination may be totally disregarded. "They form a kind of council to the superintendent," says Mr. Beecham, "with whom he converses on the state of the society; but his authority is not shared with the local meetings, nor are they constituted judges with him;" and of course, if they are not to "judge," the consultation is a mere farce.

The party making these concessions had expressly declared, "that there is now no society officer among us who can be received, without consent of the meeting to which he particularly belongs; nor can any officer be removed, except upon the same plan." If there be any meaning in language, this must imply, that the admission or exclusion of a member in any part of the connexion can only be effected through the suffrage of those already in fellowship; and as the local preachers are doubtless some of the principal officers, they can neither be received nor excluded without the concurrence of their brethren at a local preachers' meeting, "to which they particularly belong." Yet, in the Leeds case, local preachers were excluded, not only without, but against the consent of their brethren; and this is the case which it is attempted, by implication, to justify. Mr. Beecham having put himself

forward as the special advocate of a party, acting in direct violation of the rules and regulations adopted in 1797, finds it convenient to deny their plain and obvious import, and to put upon them a different and opposite construction. With singular inconsistency he asserts, "that the rule relating to the admission of local preachers, does not extend to their *expulsion*;" their brethren can receive but not retain any of them, if it be the pleasure of other persons to put them away. Anything to secure the predominance of the priesthood answers the purpose of such a writer, even though it should make mere cyphers of the people, and reduce the regulations themselves to sheer nonsense. If the local preachers, or any other class in society, can be dealt with in the way that is pretended, there is a total end to all christian fellowship, which, if it be not voluntary, can have no existence.

Not understanding the rights of conscience himself, nor the worth of civil and religious liberty, Mr. Beecham wishes to insinuate that those who assailed the power of conference in 1795 and 97, were the abettors of the French revolution; and that their disaffection was occasioned by spurious notions of equality and independence which prevailed at that period. He even mixes up these persons with the infidels of the age, and the fifth monarchy men in the time of Cromwell; and for the mere purpose of shielding the precious 'apostolicals,' and securing to them in perpetuity the keys of St. Peter, he attempts to degrade a numerous and respectable portion of the Wesleyan society, by a gross misrepresentation of their religious and political sentiments. Had the conference viewed the conduct and motives of the complainants in the same light, or considered them as influenced by secular ambition and discontent, would they have entertained their application, or listened to their remonstrance? Would they in their circular of 1797 have made "the sacrifices they did of their authority, in order to evince a willingness," as they said, "to meet their brethren in every thing consistent with the existence of Methodist discipline, and shown a readiness to become their servants for Jesus' sake?" The reflections of this writer fall alike on the conference whom he is anxious to extol, and upon the people whom he wishes to traduce. There is, indeed, throughout the whole of his performance, such a perpetual din about "the powers and prerogatives of conference, the legislative rights of conference, the laws and enactments of conference, the supreme authority of conference, and conference being the head of the methodist body—the church," that we were perfectly stunned and stupefied with the bell of this dustman, and could only make out that he has no sympathy with the friends of popular freedom, and has little else in view than magnifying and extolling the men who sit in Moses' chair, and occupy the chief places in the synagogue. He troubles not himself about the numerous seceders in the north or in the south, is unaware of the growing dissatisfactions in other parts of the connexion, and of the issue to which things are tending; and if the dominant system be at last compelled to give way, the event will be accelerated by such advocates as Mr. Beecham, who, instead of providing a remedy, or suggesting any healing measures, increases the danger tenfold, by stoutly denying the existence of disease, and maintaining that things are all as they ought to be. This is the way that all the ultras go on, both in church and state, till they and their corruptions are swept away by the torrent of public opinion.

*(To be continued.)*

### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

It has long been manifest to the thinking portion of the nation that there is a crying necessity for reform in the national Church, and the conviction that such a necessity exists has been lately growing more general; so general, indeed, that I dare venture to affirm, that not one man in a hundred can be found whose sincere opinion is not in its favour. The conviction has at length penetrated through the covering of interest and prejudice, and educational superstition, to the hearts of some of the more pious of the clergymen themselves; so that we have been favoured in this our day to behold two in our own community alone, who, from the pulpit and the press, have, with a master's hand directed by a Christian heart, boldly unveiled the defects of the present system, and pointed out the remedies which must be adopted to save the venerable fabric from its impending danger. These, Gentlemen, are honourable men—deserving to be held up to the admiration of all mankind, and of generations yet unborn; but, if such clergymen as these deserve our commendation, what praises shall be awarded to him, to them, the Wesleyan preacher or preachers, who shall stand forth the champions of invaded rights and violated covenants, and slain souls—the victims of the unholy thirst of power, which has disgraced the dominant faction in the Conference? They shall live for ever in the prayers, the gratitude, and eternal happiness of thousands; before whose faces the stumbling-blocks, which have caused many to fall, shall be removed and cast into the depths of the sea. And are there no such men in our Conference? *There are! and they only await a more decided and general expression of the society's opinions and wishes, to induce them to step forth and challenge corruption to the encounter within his very den!*

You, Messrs. Editors, have nobly done your part; you have provided a medium, through which these opinions and wishes may be freely declared. It is open to all, and its voice is powerful. Let, then, the whole society respond to the call you have made upon them; let them shew that they are worthy successors of the men who, in 1797, refused to be governed by the preachers' arbitrary and irresponsible will, and demanded a constitution; a constitution which, alas! has, in our days, been shamefully violated. When the people thus come forward, and shake off their apathy, they will find that there are in the Conference an Aspinall, a Hull, and a Beverley, who will espouse their cause. I have applied the term apathy to the conduct of my brethren; it is an apathy which is the offspring of despair; they have looked upon their fetters, and in utter hopelessness given up the attempt to free themselves. And why? Because they are ignorant of their own strength. Their fetters shall be broken by the talismanic watchword of *union*:—what one cannot effect, numbers will easily accomplish.

I am aware that the faction to which we are opposed has succeeded with many in its attempts to throw discredit on the Circular, by representing its conductors as discontented and disappointed men, whose object is to sow discord among brethren, and who have sheltered themselves behind the screen of anonymous signatures, lest their characters should be known, and thereby their

exertions be nullified. This is a specious mode of attack, and has not failed of its aim in many quarters, but especially with those who have never ventured to think for themselves, but have been in the habit of taking upon trust whatever has been stated by their preachers. Now, let these persons ask themselves what would follow an avowal on the part of the Editors? Would it not be a sure and certain way of defeating their own design? since no preacher would allow them to remain members of the church over which he presides as the agent of the Conference. I admit, that to expel a man from the society because he differed from the faction in their exposition in Methodist law would be extremely illiberal, and to debar him from the privileges of freedom of speech and pen, is contrary to every feeling of English liberty: yet such would be the certain fate of him who should dare publicly to expose the doings of certain persons high in power. You have therefore no alternative, but to give up the task you have undertaken, or to persevere through all the obloquy that party malice can heap upon you—satisfied that your work is of God, and your reward with him.

You have rightly judged that the press is the great public monitor; yet Methodism had no benefit from its lessons until your publication was originated: now its voice is heard denouncing every evil measure and every dangerous innovator of popular rights: no wonder then that those whose faults are brought to light should turn with impotent rage upon their corrector. Every pest to society, down to the murderer Thurtell, has complained of the feeling excited against him by the public press, and no doubt each and all of them would have applied for criminal informations against the Editors who had done society the service of exposure, if conviction, transportation, or execution had not interfered to prevent their intentions.

I trust, then, you will disregard the murmurs of those who wince under your editorial lash, and still stand as a sleepless sentinel beside the sacred cause of religious liberty, to see that its rights be not invaded; and while you suffer no offender to escape the punishment which is justly due to him, you will know how to passionat those failings which are inseparable from human agency and momentary excitation. Thus shall we see this invaluable exotic effectually established in our soil; and when, like the venerable cedar on Mount Libanus, its root shall be incorporated with the bowels of the land, the screaming of an owl among its branches will not scare away the traveller who shall rest beneath its shade.

I am, &c.

A CLASS-LEADER.

Liverpool, 15th June, 1831.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

FROM circumstances which have lately come to my knowledge, I have good reasons for believing that a certain "General" and his subordinates are endeavouring, if possible, to discover, in order to upset you, doubtless imagining that by so doing they will put an end to your useful and meritorious labours in the good work of

reform; therefore, I would have you act warily;—depend upon it you are denounced men;—the thunders of an offended priesthood and their wily adherents are about to fall on your devoted heads. But where do you lurk? Where is your hiding place? You seem to be *nobody*, and to have no locality. Liverpool north and Liverpool south both affirm you are not of them, and yet these are the only sections or marks of division amongst the Methodists in Liverpool!

Why, Gentlemen, some say unscrupulously that you tell *lies*, call *names*;—that you publish matter only calculated to spread *infidelity* in the land;—that Tom Paine's publications are nothing in comparison for wickedness and wicked tendencies! All this, and more, I can assure you, is said by many who, to shew you that they are honourable men and *consistent* characters, declare they *never read a page* of your periodical!! These must certainly be knowing ones, with a witness, as they come to a conclusion so easily and possess such wonderful powers in argument. Let me again repeat, I would have you be careful; for, if you can by any means be ferreted out, you will be fully exposed, and most terribly punished, whether right or wrong. You know, a jaundiced eye sees every thing discoloured, and no disparagement to mental vision is greater than *violent prejudice*; but at all times truth must prevail. But, after all, it certainly is an awful thing to be denounced, and deprived of Christian fellowship amongst the Methodists. You may leave the Church of England—the Independents—the Baptists—the Quakers, and others, and perhaps, after all, *die well*, especially if you become a Methodist; but should you be expelled, or voluntarily secede from their communion, remember, that at best you can only expect to "die under a cloud."

Your well-wisher,

FACTUM.

Liverpool, June, 1831.

••• Our correspondent seems quite alarmed for our safety; but we can assure him, that whatever may be his apprehensions, (and they appear pretty strong) we are quite easy; and as to any "ferreting" of the "General" and others in authority under him, to identify us, it only affords us occasion to smile at their simplicity. Factum's communication, however, bears some affinity to a letter we lately received from Yorkshire, in which it is stated. "there is a report here that the 'General' and his friends are in motion amongst you; to discover and put down the 'Radical party' by *wholesome discipline*; if so, I trust that distant friends will rally round you, and give you tangible proof that the people are determined, henceforward, to have an organ of communication of their own."—*Edits.*

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We have to thank our kind correspondent "Ezra" for his exertions, the tangible result of which we have safely received.

We are sorry that we cannot insert the communication of "A FRIEND," in the conversational form which he has adopted. If he will take the trouble to give us the substance, in the shape of a letter, we shall feel obliged.

Further communications from "FIDELIS" will be acceptable.

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# The Circular

TO

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XIX.

30TH JULY, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

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### TO THE WESLEYAN MINISTERS ASSEMBLED IN CONFERENCE AT BRISTOL.

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DEAR FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

As you are again met for your accustomed annual consultation on the affairs of that Church over which it hath pleased God to place you, we deem it our duty to renew our protest against your late proceedings,—to furnish such information, and to give such advice, as may, if followed, conduce to the welfare of the Connexion whose best interests we have so much at heart.

It may not be improper here to inform some of the influential members of your body, that the assertion they have lately made with so much apparent satisfaction, "that the Circular is decreasing in circulation," is incorrect. The simple fact is, that we do not *print* so many now as we did last year, but that each succeeding month the *sale* increases a little, so that more are now actually disposed of than at any former period. To us this slow, but sure progress, is highly satisfactory, and indicates clearly, that although at present we may not be able to do much more than prevent the increase of misgovernment, that the time is not far distant when a power will be vested in us which, by the blessing of God, we shall be enabled to wield for the restoration of original Methodism, by a thorough reform of the abuses introduced by your authority.

The situation in which you have been placed ever since your approval, in 1828, of the proceedings at Leeds, and especially since your high toned resolution of 1829, has, indeed, been difficult and painful. Previously to these two important periods your meetings were only looked up to with interest and affection, but how different is the case now. You assemble under the conviction that your whole conduct is narrowly watched by a jealous and discontented people, by whom

you may rest assured that any further declarations you may think proper to make about your determination to "maintain and uphold the laws of 1795 and 1797," will meet with little credit so long as the obnoxious resolutions above referred to remain unrepealed. Your conduct hitherto, in this respect, has been exactly similar to that of Louis XIV. who, at every fresh breach he made in the liberty of the subject, took especial care to declare "that he was determined to abide by the edict of Nantz," by which their rights were nominally secured. Oppression under the apparent sanction of law is at once the most cruel and vindictive ever exercised by tyrants, whether in Church or State.

You are, indeed, encompassed with difficulties of no ordinary magnitude, and yet we have little hope that your pride will submit to the only course calculated to remove them.

We rejoice to know that there are amongst you many excellent men, and laborious servants in the vineyard, who would speedily and heartily set themselves to the work of reconciliation, by adopting those measures most likely to accomplish so desirable an object; but we regret also to know, that such individuals sit not in the "high places" at Conference, and unwisely leave the concerns of the Connexion to be *managed* by a very inconsiderable number of individuals,—heads of houses,—who have been too long looked up to as the conservators of Methodism; and yet these are the men, from whom have emanated those daring innovations in original Methodism, of which it has been one object of this work to expose and complain.

Next to the necessity of bolstering up the tottering system by some expedient calculated to allay the dissatisfaction of the people, the most important question for your consideration is, what is the present state and future prospects of Wesleyan Methodism?

Methodism in its early stages was eminently a work of God—the few persons who began it laboured hard, and those who were added from time to time did the same. So long as this continued it increased rapidly,

and had those who have been added up to the present time, continued to act in the same way, there is no doubt but it would still have continued to increase. But when once the feeling "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing" began to influence the minds of the preachers, and, in consequence, the minds of the people, their joint object became, not the spread of the Gospel amongst the poor, but the building of beautiful Chapels to attract the rich, and a supposed binding of the rich to the system, by making them responsible for the heavy sums requisite to build and adorn these worldly baits.

The fact can now no longer be concealed that Methodism is retrograding in a fearful ratio; for although in your last minutes you affect to dwell with satisfaction on a supposed increase of 1700 members, yet you must very well know that, upon the common principle of calculation, the increase ought to be in proportion to the power employed in its production: such an increase can only be looked upon as the forerunner of a heavy decrease.

We give only one instance of this, being the town in which we write. In 1821 there were (including St. Helen's) 3,800 members and 5 travelling preachers. In 1830 there were (including St. Helena's, 150,) 3,810 members and 8 preachers; being an increase of 10 members and 3 preachers. In 1821 the population of the town was 141,487, and by the census just taken it is 203,865. Such facts need no comment.

The principle we would lay down in regard to ourselves as a religious community is, that had we, instead of quarrelling about non-essentials, been content to leave them to the rule and guidance of the great Head of the Church, and still continued to labour and pray, as at the beginning, Methodism would have continued to increase in the ratio of its increased power, and of the population of the country. Instead of which, it now exhibits awful symptoms of decrepitude and a premature old age. This comes of man endeavouring to mend that which was so purely a work of God.

The condition, then, of the Connexion is simply this:—

It is decreasing rapidly every year:

It is heavily burdened with debt, and the means of raising money being lessened, must cause many families to look forward to utter ruin:

The people, whether you will believe it or not, are generally dissatisfied;—there is a proscription of all who speak plainly their views of passing events, and the consequence is, that important offices in the Societies are being filled by persons quite unfit for the proper discharge of their duties.

What, then, is our advice under these distressing circumstances?

Rescind the obnoxious resolution alluded to:—give positive instructions that there be no proscription of

individuals for opinion, but only for impiety and misconduct:—build no more chapels, unless clear of all debt, and the money collected before going to work:—establish such a chapel-fund as we have recommended in this work:—ease yourselves of the intolerable burden of money and secular affairs, and attend solely to your spiritual duties.

Do these things, and you will soon find that *all* your people, and none more heartily and cheerfully than the supporters of this work, will join heart and hand with you in the measures requisite to extend the doctrines and the Church we love.

Still persist in your old course, maintaining your authority and infallibility, and all the patchwork requisite to keep your ground:—base your claim to love and affection upon the pecuniary responsibility of your people:—and you will but increase the combination of those materials, which, with the irresistible impetus of an Alpine avalanche, shall, ere long, involve in ruin the noblest Christian system the world has yet been blessed with.

We have heard it whispered, that you intend, as a panacea for all existing evils, to endeavour to carry into effect the plan proposed in 1829, or something similar, for educating young preachers. But previously to deciding upon bringing such a burden on a people already drained beyond endurance, we recommend to your serious consideration, an article on this subject in our number for February, 1830, which places the matter in so clear a light as to render any further arguments on our part superfluous.

With much regret we have just received information that in the city in which you are assembled, there is a serious division in the Society. If this be true, we trust your conduct will be such as to restore peace and unanimity.

One thing more we have to say, and we pray you take it in good part. Do not let your conferential addresses to the people be composed in such a namby-pamby canting style. If you have any thing to say, let it be said in a plain and straight forward manner. And do not let the address to the Irish Conference, and the pages of the Magazine, be made vehicles for inuendo. The sale of the latter will be very much injured if such *stuff*, as has latterly appeared in some of its pages, continue to be admitted.

We pray you to pardon what you may see amiss in this production, and to believe, that if the truth could have been conveyed in milder terms it should have been done.

Praying that you may be directed aright in the important affairs committed to your trust,

We are,

Yours, very respectfully,

THE EDITORS.

LIVERPOOL, 30th JULY, 1831.

THE following letter, although dated July, 1830, owing to its having been mislaid by our London publisher, did not reach us until the latter end of November last, in consequence of which, it was not inserted in our columns; but finding, on recent inquiry, that the strong dissatisfaction and evil consequences attending the division of the London South Circuit, have not diminished, but rather increased, we have determined to publish the Letter of our Correspondent, and regret that circumstances should have prevented its insertion in proper order.—*Edits.*

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

I am not a little displeased and dissatisfied with the ruinous effects produced by the division of the London South Circuit into two, which was obtained by stratagem, and carried at a quarterly meeting by a majority of only two, who were travelling preachers. In a case like this, sound policy and religious feeling, if not brotherly love, dictated its abandonment. But, no;—there exists a rage for multiplying Circuits, and diminishing itinerancy: the consequence to this Circuit is, that we find, at the conclusion of nine months, we are one hundred pounds in debt,—and I have reason to believe the other Circuit is in a worse state. In vain did we remonstrate, petition, and foretel the Conference of 1829 what we feared, and what has now really happened. Now you know the money must be raised to liquidate this debt in some way; collections in the chapels will not do,—of these we have too many already. The only alternative will be by a committee formed for the express purpose of begging from house to house. And who among us possess courage and manliness sufficient to refuse; and who is so stripped of pride as to expose his want of means, although giving might injure his family? I know the pressure is so great, that every possible means will be resorted to; the leaders are strongly exhorted to urge the necessity in their classes on the members, to make peculiar and extraordinary exertions to raise money, and to bind themselves, if the people will not or cannot pay more, to make the amount double of what they were accustomed to contribute. The call for money among us is so urgent, and the applications so frequent, that many have been driven away. I met a person this day who was once a zealous and diligent Methodist member, and I asked, “What is the reason I do not see you in the chapel as usual?” “Why, to tell you the truth,” said he, “I have been greatly afflicted, and do not possess the means of paying class and ticket money as I used to do, and I know those who do not pay are not wanted.”

At an official meeting there came on the tapis a Poor-house, where on a Sunday morning we have from three to four hundred hearers: it was asked, “do we get any class money or any pecuniary aid therefrom?” On one replying “No,” the superintendent said, “I do not see what is the use of throwing our labours away upon such a place as that; we get nothing from any of the Poor-houses.” But, by the way, neither he nor his colleague ever laboured there, or in either of the other two Poor-houses which are in our Circuit,—they being supplied by the local preachers, who are too often treated with obloquy and contempt, and who are supposed by the travelling preachers to be highly favoured in being *allowed* to officiate at all, and without whose aid they would do if they could. I say this unhesitatingly, having been informed of what passed on this subject at the Conference of 1829.

I can remember well, many years ago, and down to two or three years past, when the local preachers had occasionally an appointment, (not often, indeed,) and not only at the time of Conference but at other times, in the best chapels in this Circuit; but the time is gone by. Then, the travelling preachers were not jealous of their ministerial abilities, and would with pleasure hear of their usefulness; and useful they have been, and are to this day, in the church of Christ, as many of the members throughout all the Methodist connexion can attest. The truth is, all our great and popular travelling preachers were once approved local preachers, or they never would have been appointed to their present labours. And ought they to forget, and be ungrateful to, those who raised them to those high, influential, and useful stations?

There appears little unity of the spirit among us, and the bond of peace is unhappily broken. It is as if a deep sleep had fallen upon us, or a dense smoke from the bottomless pit had dimmed our eyes, and I fear there will come a sifting time, and the Wesleyan Methodist connexion will be rent into pieces. Who will arise, and come to the help of the Lord! to the help of the Lord against the mighty?

I am well assured that great discontent and murmuring, and sowing the seeds of discord, are softly, though not slowly, spreading their influence, and if not checked by a timely recurrence of our rulers to the concessions of 95 and 97, will do great havoc in the church. It requires no prophetic spirit to foresee and foretel what necessarily must be the consequences.—They will be more terrific and baneful than a dreadful earthquake or volcanic eruption, spreading consternation, confusion, dismay, and division throughout the whole body. And what can be done to scatter this gathering cloud, and avert these threatening and impending dangers?

Let the travelling and local preachers, stewards, trustees, leaders, and private members, humble themselves before God, implore his direction and assistance, and each and all, for the sake of Zion's prosperity and the peace of Jerusalem, be willing to become any thing or nothing, so that we may regain the holiness, felicity, union, peace, and brotherly love, we have most assuredly lost. Difference of opinion has occasioned us to slide back into a worldly and sinful spirit—much to our injury, and subversive of our mental comfort.

May the Almighty God awaken us from our slumber and alarm us, so that we may discover the dreadful gulph that is before us; that, affrighted at the horrible prospect, we may “starting cry, from ruin's brink, save Jesus, or I yield,—I sink,—O save me, or I die!” I only add, I love the sheep, and wish to feed them.

VERITAS.

London, 17th July, 1830.

\* \* The following is an extract of a letter just received from Lambeth.

“ This Circuit (one of the divisions of London South) is in a most deplorable state. The debt keeps accumulating; last quarter day it was above £200. We have no Circuit stewards, and the preachers, who are the authors of the division of the Circuit, are obliged to go without their money, as no one will advance any more. The division of this Circuit has been an entire failure; it

has done immense mischief, and no good whatever. All the strength and wisdom of the great men in London—preachers and people, have been put forth to make the division answer; but all will not do. When will the Conference strive to live in the affections of the people? Surely they will learn wisdom from the present low state of Methodism both in London and in many parts of the country."

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

If you think the following paper worthy of public notice, perhaps you will give it a place in your monthly important Methodist Circular.

Yours, very respectfully,

Sheffield, 1831.

G. R.

Mr. Samuel Jackson, the superintendent of the Sheffield circuit, having had recourse to various shifts and stratagems to avoid the justly merited censure due to his arbitrary conduct towards one of the local preachers, whom he had previously removed, solely upon his own authority; and having also made some notorious private and public attempts to evade the charge of exercising any such unwarrantable authority, I herewith annex a correct copy of the original mandate, now before me, in Mr. Jackson's own hand writing, and shall leave the reader to judge how far his futile attempts either to elude the truth, or to justify such proceedings, are worthy of credit. I shall not further comment upon this document, than by stating two important facts, which were admitted by Mr. Jackson in the Leaders' Meeting, subsequently to his issuing the following insulting order, namely, First,—That he had not seen Mr. Lockwood, nor had he received any intimation from him either direct or indirect, nor was there any real cause whatever to justify the adoption of such an unchristianlike measure. The fact was, that the leader with whom Mr. L. met in class, had informed his members at their preceding meeting, that he could no longer conscientiously continue to support the innovations and arbitrary and oppressive measures of the Conference. And as Mr. L, who is a peaceable, but considerate man, did not forthwith obediently wait upon the superintendent to make declaration of allegiance to his supreme authority, he was suspected of heretical gravity, or want of reverence for that authority, and instantly dealt with accordingly.

The superintendent not only acted without consulting the individual, thus implicated, to ascertain whether the "information" upon which he grounded this strange lawless proceeding, was correct, but, Secondly,—He had not consulted either the leaders' or the local preachers' meeting, and therefore it is evident he did not think it needful to obtain the sanction of any of those high-sounding, but imaginary "conservative authorities of the body," but in the genuine *character and spirit of a FAITHFUL "CHIEF PASTOR" of modern Methodism*, he acted according to the dictum of his own WILL, (in unison, no doubt, with the *oraculum* of Conference) and utterly regardless of any presumed local authorities, although he has subsequently deemed it expedient to practice as a *faint pleader*, in order to obtain from them a poor miserable, though to them expensive, *covering*, as a cloak to hide his shame. With these remarks I present the document itself to speak for its author.

#### COPY (*verbatim.*)

" My dear Sir,

" I am informed that you stated in your class on Tuesday evening last, that ' you were no longer a member of the Methodist society.'

" It is, you know, contrary to our rules, for our pulpits to be occupied by men who are not members of the society.

" I have therefore made arrangements, and your places will be supplied, by accredited preachers, during the remaining part of the present plan.

" If you think it worth your while to meet my informant, and can prove his statement incorrect, I shall be happy to undo what I have done.

" If not, you will consider your engagements with us as *now at an end*.

" Hoping that God will direct and bless you,

" I am yours, affectionately,

" SAML. JACKSON."

" Rockingham-street, Oct. 3d."

It is our intention occasionally to insert characteristic notices or sketches of some of the most popular Methodist Preachers, and we commence the series with

#### THE REV. JABEZ BUNTING, A.M.

This gentleman, whose name has of late years been so distinguished in Methodism, has, for some time past, been in comparative retirement. His friends in Liverpool express considerable anxiety on his account; they are apprehensive lest the severe personal afflictions which have for upwards of twelve months pressed heavily upon him, should have given such a shock to his general health, as may prevent his ever resuming his official duties with his wonted energy and efficiency.

In private life we are assured that Mr. Bunting possesses many amiable qualities;—that he is an affectionate husband,—a kind and indulgent father,—and that, where his private friendships do not stand in the way of his principles and policy, as a ruler in the Church, they have been characterised by feeling and sincerity. We do homage to these virtues, and sincerely trust that there is no serious ground for the apprehension of his friends, but that Mr. Bunting may long be spared as the worthy object of their admiration, and to correct many errors which have marked the progress of his public life.

A season of retirement to a public character is frequently of the utmost importance, not only to himself, but also to that portion of the public who may be influenced or affected by his future conduct. Far be it from us to break in upon any man's privacy. It is not our business to question motives, to search a man's spirit and temper, nor to interfere with the solemn and awful duties of conscience. The public acts, professions, and principles, of a public man alone fall within the sphere of our labours. These are at all times open to public observation, and the measure of approbation or disapprobation which they permanently receive constitutes the character of their author whilst living, and his reputation when dead.

Mr. Bunting's early advantages it is evident were comparatively few; and his subsequent attainments in literature and general knowledge are not such as would have advanced him to his present eminence, even in such an assembly as the Methodist Conference. The editor of the Magazine extolling, as in duty bound, his sermon on Justification by Faith, laments that the public have not been favored with other productions from his pen; but Mr. Bunting has bettersense. Had he written more, he would have ruined himself. He relied on his talents in another line; and had he understood the proper limits of his own capacity, he would have stood higher, and retained his popularity much longer.

His appearance in the pulpit is artless and respectable. In person rather above the middle size, and inclined to corpulence; disease, indeed, has of late given to his countenance a bloated appearance, and very much impaired his physical energies. His voice, when kept within its proper compass, is clear, distinct in articulation, and very agreeable; but when raised beyond a certain pitch, as is frequently the case in his applications, it is harsh, monotonous, and shrill, and gives, occasionally, with the accompanying manner, the idea of a person scolding from violent passion. His chief physical defect in the pulpit is the want of a pair of eyes, capable of lighting up the countenance and giving expression to the soul of an orator.

The order and the compass of his mind may be best estimated by what (amongst the Methodists) have been denominated his great sermons. The incessant repetition of these sermons in every chapel, of every circuit which he has travelled, sufficiently indicate that they are comparatively few in number; whilst the identity of arrangement, illustration, and phraseology, even to the measure of a sentence, and the rounding of a period, proves that they have been composed with care, and are recited from memory. In the application alone he has been observed to allow himself greater latitude; and then a very perceptible change of style and manner indicates, at once, that he has passed from the manuscript to extemporary harangue. This change, from what is studied and well arranged, to what is random and hazardous, characterizes the man.

The excellency of his sermons consists in an ample developement of his subject, in all its principal bearings;—a clear and lucid arrangement;—the selection of just and striking illustrations, drawn either from the Scriptures or from common life;—and great chastity of style and language. Shunning controversy, and aiming at what is practical, in his appeals to the understanding, he generally succeeds in gaining the judgment of the hearer. Rising with a natural warmth and energy, which has the appearance of being enkindled by his subject, he gradually enlists the affections, and interests the heart; and so long as he can abstain from violence of manner and gesture, he has great power in searching the conscience, and in compelling the sinner to become his own accuser. With the weak, the fearful, the trembling believer, he does not

succeed so well. They are more likely to be struck down by his truisms, and appalled by his powerful exhibitions of general doctrines. Mr. Bunting is what may very properly be denominated "a *good* preacher." He neither possesses the power which would entitle him to the designation of "a son of thunder," nor does he know the tenderness of heart which should qualify him for "a son of consolation."

Mr. Bunting's mind may be regarded as approaching perfection within its own sphere; but that sphere is neither so extensive, nor so elevated, as his admirers would persuade themselves. It might indeed have been, in some degree, enlarged and exalted by a more liberal education, and a more general acquaintance with classical literature. We are aware that he can construe a sentence of Latin; but we have never been able to discover, in either his sermons or his speeches, any other acquaintance with the ancient classics, than every man who reads English must acquire from translations, and from quotations in the writings of our more learned divines. The expositions and criticisms, occasionally introduced in his addresses from the pulpit, are evidently such only as have been handed to him by commentators and theological writers in our vernacular tongue.

But no advantages of education—no intensity of application, or laboured acquisitions of study, could have entitled Mr. Bunting to rank as a *great* writer, or a great preacher, in the proper and legitimate sense of the term. Nature will have her own play, and she maintains her own prerogative. Education and art are but her handmaids. They may adorn with external ornaments, but they can add nothing to the intrinsic merit and essential worth of her performances. She has bestowed on Mr. Bunting very happy powers of a secondary, or perhaps rather a third-rate, order; but she has denied to him what is essential to greatness, viz. a powerful imagination, and that noble faculty of the soul by which a man of genius is enabled to strike out new and grand ideas. In his best efforts, he leads you into a beautiful garden, abounding with shrubs and flowers, which charm the eye and please the sense. You applaud the skill of the gardener, and admire his selection of plants. But there are no novelties; nothing which you have not seen and admired before, though perhaps in less agreeable order and less pleasing variety. And if, in the zeal which your commendation inspires, you suffer him to lead you too far, your eye may perchance to alight on an overgrown weed, or your nose be offended by a noxious effluvia; for, though generally chaste, he can sometimes be vulgar even in the pulpit.

Lord of the *parterre*, the shaven lawn, the cultivated garden, with its pretty fountain and bubbling stream, he constantly paces the dull and weary round of its smooth and levelled walks, equally complacent to his welcomed guest, and fiercely stern against the incautious or daring trespasser. But his mind knows no expanse. No undefined and swelling impulse within his breast ever tempted him to scale the rugged

rock, or climb the mountain brow, or brave, on ocean's wave, the lowering tempest and the raging storm. His measured imagination has no sympathy with those majestic scenes, in which nature, wild and grand, stupendous and boundless in her operations, mocks the mimickry of art, and pours infinitude on the soul.

But it was as a Conference politician that the name of Bunting acquired its principal lustre, and has suffered the most severe eclipses. His excellencies and his faults in this department are such as might have been expected from the character of his mind. Methodism, as *exclusively* a WORK of GOD, he could never comprehend. From mere *instinct*, he commenced his career in Conference by crying out against the authority of the old Conference of the HUNDRED; and, under the plea of Liberty, assailing those barriers which Mr. Wesley had erected against pride and ambition, within the walls of Conference. These barriers once forced, and himself seated in the chair of Conference, the cry of liberty was of course as *instinctively* dropped; and thenceforth, the grand aim of all his measures, and the great secret of his policy, have been to render Methodism imposing and respectable in the eyes of the world. We shall not now enter into any discussion of Methodist politics, either in or out of Conference; but content ourselves with the remark, that, in principle and in spirit, such a course of policy is utterly opposed to a work of God. The politics of this world are conformable to the course of this world. Crooked, complicated and perverse, they are ever at variance with the plain and straight forward *yea, yea, and nay, nay*, of the Saviour. We need no further proof of the spirit which such a policy must always introduce, than is afforded by the breaking up of the fraternity established within the Conference at Mr. Wesley's death. This bond of brotherhood ceased to exist when orders were given for an extended platform, on which certain *Reverend Eminent*es, spurning the equal benches and panting for distinction, elevated themselves above the heads of their brethren. Since the introduction of this policy, the Conference has wasted more time in discussing and passing complimentary resolutions and votes of thanks one to another, than Mr. Wesley would have allowed to be spent on matters of infinitely greater importance. Of the Jews, our Lord demanded, with awful emphasis, "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—JOHN v. 44.

#### STRUCTURES ON MR BEECHAM'S ESSAY.

*Continued from page 143.*

Mr. Beecham has been careful to reiterate the power and authority of Christian pastors, and their right to rule the Church, but has studiously avoided all definition of the terms, except that they are not to rule "imperiously or tyrannically," which vaguely concedes any degree of authority that priestly arrogance might choose to assume. Neither Laud nor Bonner thought they were acting tyrannically, but according to the power that God had given them, in sending heretics to the dungeon and the stake; and a Methodist minister, with his associates, may think the same, in

excluding hundreds and thousands from communion for the sake of an organ, and displaying their own authority; but both God and the people will be their judge.

This gentleman has dwelt so much among episcopal and popish writers, and imbibed such notions of high church power and influence, that he has shewn himself totally incapable of understanding this part of his subject. No one denies that the scriptures teach submission to pastoral authority, or that we are to "obey those who have the rule over us;" but it is necessary to ascertain the nature and extent of that obedience, before it can become a reasonable service, or form any part of the will of God. If this submission is to be a religious and not a servile submission, it must be a submission to divine and not to human authority; and before it can be such the people must be convinced that it is according to the Scriptures, which involves the right of inquiry, both as to the import and obligation of pastoral injunctions. Take away the right of judging, and all conviction ceases, and with it all rational obedience. Christians are bound to obey nothing but the truth, nothing but this can bind the conscience. Authority to rule and govern in the Church is ministerial only, not legislative, and the power of a pastor lies in his doctrine and example. Christ himself is the only lawgiver of the Church; all his laws are recorded in the Scriptures, none besides can have any force, or possess any legitimate authority. Should a Conference or a Synod pretend to make laws where he has made none, fidelity to him requires they should be rejected. "Teaching for doctrine the commandments of men makes void the law," and destroys the very nature of Christian obedience. Yet by a strange perversion this writer maintains that submission to pastoral authority, to be sincere, must be implicit; and that if it arises from a conviction that what is commanded is according to the will of God, it is an obedience to divine rather than to pastoral authority. Before, however, he can consistently demand this kind of subjection, he must establish his claim to infallibility; the man who confesses himself liable to err, and at the same time requires implicit submission to his authority, betrays at once his ignorance of human nature, and his love of domination.

So much vaunting about the power of the priesthood, and the right to implicit obedience, naturally creates suspicion that something is rotten in the present state of Methodism, and suggests the necessity of farther inquiry. Nothing like these high pretensions is to be found in any part of the New Testament. The great and good Shepherd was among his disciples "as one that serveth;" being meek and lowly in heart he did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; and he hath left us an example that we should follow his steps. The great apostle of the Gentiles was among his brethren as a nurse that cherisheth her children, willing to impart not the gospel of God only, but his own soul also, because they were dear unto him. And would he have made a schism among them for the sake of a psaltery or a harp; he who declared that if meat made his brother to offend, he would eat no flesh while the world standeth? Do we hear the same apostle beseeching and persuading his brethren by the meekness and gentleness of Christ to receive his counsel: and shall we listen to the dogmatizing of a Methodist preacher on the subject of pains and penalties, in case his authority should be disregarded? Are his dictates so infallible that the people have no right to examine them, or to judge of his pretensions, in order to ascertain the extent of their obligations? How strange it is he does not perceive the difference between the claims of inspired men, and those of ordinary teachers. The authority of the former being peculiar, could not descend to others, but ceased with the age of inspiration. To have rejected the authority of the apostles, would have been an abandonment of Christianity itself; but the authority of an uninspired teacher cannot surely be placed on the same footing. Yet we find that the exercise of power, even on the part of these highly gifted men, was marked with the utmost tenderness and forbearance, very unlike to that of their pretended successors. It seemed good "to the Holy Ghost," and equally so to them, that no other burden should be laid on the churches than such as arose from "necessary things;" on points not obviously within the design of the Gospel, or not essential to Christianity, they were content to give their counsel and advice, but they forbore to command. Far from being "lords over God's heritage," they pleased all men to their edification, and became all things to all men that they might gain some.

*(To be continued.)*

## A FRAGMENT.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."—Rev. iii. 17.

AFTER a season of long drought and spiritual dearth, a little cloud was seen to arise, "like a man's hand," which rapidly spread and covered the face of Britain. "And it came to pass in the mean while that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain."—I Kings, xviii. 45. No figure can better illustrate the rise, the progress, and the results of Wesleyan Methodism. It was small indeed in its beginning, accompanied with clouds and wind,—with opposition, reproach, and persecution, which darkened the whole hemisphere; but it was a copious effusion of the Spirit, and by it the Lord rained down righteousness on many people.

As in the days of the Apostles the word of the Lord "grew and multiplied," so under the influence of Methodism, the savour of religion has been spread abroad. Although the nations of Europe, beclouded with antichristian darkness and superstition, have but dimly participated in this great and glorious effusion of the Holy Spirit, yet the sun of righteousness has poured down his beams on the Continent of America and the western Isles of the Atlantic. He has gilded the coasts of benighted Africa, and cheered her gloomy kraals with the light of life. On the savage Islands of the South Pacific he has smiled with an influence so direct and powerful as to present the image of so many new Edens springing out of chaos. And in his rapid march he already begins to lift the darkness from off the pagan shores of India, and to promise the radiance of Gospel day to all the eastern world.

But the clouds which rise from the earth still overhang the sky. Too dense and thick to be speedily dissipated, they are driven to and fro in the atmosphere, and tossed in the eddy of the winds, and, in their frightful passage, they too often cast their dark and dismal shadows on lands which were once illumined, and give back to darkness, regions which have long rejoiced in the light of Heaven. What church has retained its purity for more than a single age? And what revival of religion has not been followed by decline in less than a century?

There is a God in heaven on whose word we rely! Clouds and darkness encompass **HIM** round, but judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne. To every church, in every age, he utters his voice. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea! Oh! that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him; but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."—Isaiah, xlvi. 18.—Psal. lxxxi, 13—16.

When, therefore, the prosperity of any church is on the wane; when trouble and darkness overtake her; when peace and harmony give place to dissension and discord; and when the unity of the

Spirit and the bond of perfectness are broken by schism and secession, it is in vain that her rulers rail against their opponents, and insist on the righteousness of their own cause. The causes which divide christian churches, and scandalize religion, are seldom worth contention. One half of christendom excommunicated the other half in a dispute about the day of Easter. But in the eye of **HIM** who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks, what we call the *cause* is but a *consequence*, and proceeds directly from himself. "*The cause is from the Lord, that he might perform his saying.*"—I Kings, xii, 15. His spirit, in revealing the true and latent cause, prescribes also the only remedy: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."—Rev. ii, 4, 5.

A RETURN TO PRIMITIVE SIMPLICITY AND PURITY IS THE ONLY SALVATION OF A DECLINING CHURCH.

EPSILON.

London, July, 1831.

## TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

I look upon "The Circular to Wesleyan Methodists" as the only medium of religious communication in this country that is unshackled and independent of all party influence. Those who say that you do not admit fair discussion between those who differ on points of discipline, and who wish to think and act alike, I believe, "bear false witness against their neighbour." They say that which they have never tried, and therefore cannot prove. I value your publication on other grounds: it affords a plain man, like myself, an opportunity of divulging his feelings and of telling his mind to his brethren (for all men in the Church of Christ are brethren) in the form of a letter. This kind of writing is both useful and entertaining. As it approaches nearer than any other to conversation, it is better calculated to introduce us into familiar acquaintance with the writer, who, whilst he freely communicates his sentiments to his friends, unintentionally discloses the disposition of his mind, and thereby exhibits his own character. Here, as Dr. Blair very pertinently expresses it, "we look for the man, not for the author." All stiffness and formality are thrown aside: we see him, as it were, at home, in a kind of undress, and in a situation which allows him to be at ease, and to give vent, occasionally, to the overflowings of his heart.

In my last I remarked, that, if your monthly journal were to be generally read by the great body of Methodist Christians, "*they would learn to think and judge for themselves.*" I endeavoured to establish this position. I proceed now to observe, that those, and those only, who thus exercise their faculties, will learn another important lesson.—*They will form a right estimate of Christian liberty.* This is our privilege—our undoubted right: not only liberty from sin, but liberty to think and act as moral agents. There is a short sentence in one of St. Paul's epistles which appears to me to set this matter in a clear light.—"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only, use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." What a lesson this to us all. Would to God that our "General" and his subalterns had learnt it—had studied these words previous to their errand, their disastrous errand to the brethren at Leeds. On that occasion they appear to have been influenced, not by the spirit of the Apostle, but by the spirit of the Pope.

With what earnestness has *liberty* been wished and contended for by mankind in different ages and regions of the world, and perhaps at no

period more than the present day! If obtained, how often has disappointment of expected benefits appeared to be the result! This, indeed, is not wonderful where the freedom to which the Gospel calls us is unknown or not duly appreciated.

The most astonishing instance of human depravity is, that the liberty with which Christ makes his people free, should ever be abused by preachers and private members, to his dishonour and our own destruction! How deplorable is the fact, that those who have the clearest views of evangelical liberty, and are no strangers to its transcendent comforts, should become indolent and negligent in the concerns of Christ's glory and their own salvation! That some should allow themselves to mis-govern, while others abandon themselves to worldly mindedness, or should behave with pride, passion, and overbearing insolence, both to the various ranks of their connexions in the world and to their brethren in the Church of Christ. I would ask, gentlemen, shall the example of many who are ignorant of Christ, and even our own conduct before we attained to the knowledge of Him, give us cause, on an impartial comparison, to blush? Yet, who that reads the Scriptures—that notices the actions of professing Christians, and that strictly scrutinizes his own heart and ways, but must acknowledge and mourn over the fact? I admire the admission of the excellent *Luther* on this subject, and cannot but think it applicable to many in our days.—“Even we who teach the word perform not our duty with so great zeal and diligence now, in the light of the Gospel, as we did before, in the darkness of ignorance: for, the more certain we are of the freedom purchased for us by Christ, the more cold and negligent we are in handling the word, in prayer, and in doing good.” How may this evil be avoided, and how may the spirit of the Gospel be realised? The answer is obvious. By adopting, to its full extent, the apostolic advice which we have just quoted,—“Brethren, by *love serve one another.*” This is a *service* that infringes not upon Christian freedom, but is, indeed, inseparable from it. Is it bondage for those who are members of a Christian community, who “live by the spirit,” to assert their privilege to “walk by the spirit,” by the rule of the Gospel, and not by the rule of human authority? To what advantage are the fetters loosed, if the limbs be not exercised? As well might the prison gate remain barred for ever, if I avail not myself of the liberty to go forth.

It may be contended by some that the same call for zeal and laborious exertion does not exist now as it did in the days of *Luther* and *Wesley*—that the present race are not required to follow the high and holy example of those truly devoted servants of the Lord—but, that they may enjoy, and move at their ease in, convenient circuits, and lead the lives of gentlemen. Not so did the *heavenly minded Bramwell* think. That man of God has left on record his opinion and protest against the innovation and defection of his own brethren. The times, as well as their duty, require that our preachers should be all animated with the same holy zeal to promote the honour of God, and the salvation of men. To preach much is good, but to visit and pray from house to house is better. They would thus, by their example, stir up our local preachers and leaders to the same active and holy labours. Oh! how greatly would this tend to strengthen the hands of those who now mourn and wish to be useful. To see our travelling preachers, local preachers, and leaders, all in their particular and respective spheres, thus animated, holy, active, and abundant in labour, would soon bring back the hearts of our people, raise Methodism in the general esteem to the high rank it is destined to sustain, and render it the greatest blessing to this divided and distracted land.

“The people, generally speaking, who pay any serious attention to religion and their souls, trouble not themselves with curious and quibbling questions.” What they wish to see in the ministers of religion, is a spirit and conduct agreeable to their high and holy profession. They wish to see and hear men whose hearts are in their work, and who consider not their lives dear to them, so that they may fulfil the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of

God. What they wish to hear is the Gospel in all its truth, fulness, and simplicity, as it was preached in days of yore by the Wesleys and Whitfields, and Fletchers. Where they cannot hear this, they make little or no account either of place or person. Costly chapels, and noisy organs, and dazzling eloquence, and titles of reverend, are not substitutes for this. The true preaching of the Cross is that alone which wins souls. The Cross of the Redeemer is the sinner's only refuge. This is the true foundation on which the real Church of Christ is built. To adhere to the Gospel of our Saviour in all its truth, fulness, freeness, and simplicity, is the only cement—the lasting bond of the unity and safety of Methodism.

I shall conclude, gentlemen, by an apt quotation from Bishop Burnett's discourse on the “*Pastoral Care.*” “A clergyman, by his character and design of life, ought to be a man separated from the cares and concerns of this world, and dedicated to the study and meditation of divine matters: whose conversation ought to be a pattern for others—a *constant preaching to his people*: who ought to offer up the prayers of the people in their name, and as their mouth, to God: who ought to be praying and interceding for them in secret, as well as officiating among them in public: who ought to be distributing among them *the bread of life—the word of God.* He ought to admonish, to reprove, and to comfort them, not only by his general doctrine in his sermons, but from *house to house*: that so he may do those things more home and effectually than can be done from the pulpit. He is to watch over their souls, to keep them from error, and to alarm them of their sins, by giving them *warning* of the judgments of God: to visit the sick, and to prepare them for the judgment and life to come.”

That God may raise up ministers that shall correspond with this portrait, is the prayer of, gentlemen,

Yours, very faithfully,

CYRUS.

JULY, 1831.

#### CONFERENCE OF THE PRIMITIVE METHODISTS, COMMONLY CALLED “RANTERS.”

The twelfth annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion commenced at Leicester, on Friday, May 20th, and continued its sittings until the Wednesday following. It appears, that the number of members connected with that body, in Great Britain and the Isle of Man, is 37,216, being an increase of 1681 upon the number reported at the annual meeting of 1830.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Our Sheffield Correspondent's suggestion is approved; we cannot, however, place the matter in better hands, and shall expect him to work upon his own plan. “V. S.” is received.

“*Ezra's*” advice shall be attended to.

“*Joezer*,” of Yorkshire, has our best thanks for his kindness in advertising our publication in one of the newspapers: we hope his example will be followed by others.

“Q.” may rest assured we shall keep our eye on the movements of Conference in reference to the Education plan.

We thank “W. B.” for his tabular statement; he will perceive that we have made some use of it in our address to the Conference.

Erratum in our last, page 137, for “extensive” places of worship, read “expensive.”

Received from a few friends in Leeds .....	£1 0 0
London, south .....	5 0 0

Complete sets of the “*CIRCULAR*” for the year 1830, stitched, with a suitable cover, may be had of the Publishers.

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# The Circular

TO

## WESLEYAN METHODISTS,

FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PART OF THE KINGDOM.

“PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”

No. XX.

31ST AUGUST, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

### WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE.

WE had hoped to have been enabled to furnish our readers, in this number, with interesting intelligence of the proceedings of the late Conference, held in Bristol, imagining, that as the resources of the “Christian Advocate” were ample, the columns of that journal would have afforded us information of all which could be deemed important for our readers to know. But in this we are considerably disappointed; for, although the paper alluded to does contain an account of a considerable part of the routine business of Conference, the most material matters by which the precise state of the Connexion might be fairly ascertained are not alluded to, except in very general terms; sufficient, however, is given to shew clearly that the retrograde motion which Conference-Methodism has exhibited for some time past to the thinking part of its community, has, during the past Methodistical year, been in a fearfully accelerated ratio. We profess no surprise at this fact: indeed, it would have falsified all our anticipations, had it been otherwise.

In the choice of president, the ballot-box exhibited an unusual diversity of sentiment amongst the preachers privileged to vote on that question, which, to our minds, augurs well for the progress of independence; as, in former years, the system of previous canvassing “worked so well,” that for months prior to Conference, it was well known in certain circles, who would in due time be chosen to that office. We, therefore, repeat, that the divided state of the ballot this year for the president clearly shews that the canvassing of the select few is losing its influence, and that the Preachers are beginning to act in such matters more independently.

The “Christian Advocate” says—“On examining the votes, it was found, that besides several small numbers for other preachers, there were for

Rev. Jacob Stanley 24 | Rev. J. Edmondson 44  
,, R. Treffry.... 39 | ,, Geo. Marsden 57”

We are not certain as to the views entertained by Mr. Treffry on the Leeds business; but we happen to know that both Mr. Stanley and Mr. Edmondson were opposed to the ruinous proceedings of that ever memorable and truly *special* District Meeting, and we have little doubt that such circumstance had a powerful influence on those preachers who voted in their favour.

It appears that fifty young men have been recommended by the district meetings, which, with seventeen remaining on last year's list of reserve, make a total of sixty-seven now at the disposal of the Conference. Of these, twenty-six are offered for the Foreign Missions; but, owing to the depressed state of most of the funds of the Connexion, it is supposed that very few additional preachers will be called out this year for the home work.

During the year twenty-two preachers have died, viz. in Great Britain twelve, viz. John Porter, Wm. Entwistle, Jas. Bridgnell, Thomas Harrison, Jos. Agar, John Morris, Wm. Williams, Sam. Kellett, John Jenkins, Lewis Jones, John Stamp, and Wm. Todd. In Ireland three, viz. Jas. Smith, Jas. Stuart, and Robert Strong. In the foreign stations seven, viz. Richard Marshall, James Penman, Wm. Pichott, Robert Snellgrove, Wm. Saxton, Robert Snowball, and James Vowles.

There were but few cases of delinquency, and only one of so serious a nature as to require the extreme punishment of absolute expulsion.

The increase upon last year is rather a difficult point to ascertain, an unusual degree of caution appearing on the part of the preachers in stating the precise numbers, for which we cannot blame them; as, after the egregious blunders of last year, which we exposed in this publication, they doubtless find it prudent to be a little more wary in their announcement. They, however, inform us in round numbers, that the increase in the foreign stations is about 1400, and in Great Britain from **FOUR TO SIX HUNDRED !!!\***

This, together with the intelligence “that most of the funds of the Connexion are in a depressed state,” shew pretty clearly the woful plight of modern Methodism.

Now, is it not passing strange, that in the presence of such glaring facts, the preachers should still stand out and declare that “all's well.”? We are astonished that sensible men in the face of day will resort to the

most miserable subterfuges to account for the paucity of increase in Great Britain; such as the following by Mr. Bunting:—

- 1.—Numbers not returned to Conference in conformity with the circuit schedules, the stewards of circuits being anxious to keep down the number in Society, on account of the corresponding provision to be made for preachers' children. And, in circuits where revivals have taken place, the members have not been returned in full tale, it being desirable to summer and winter them to ascertain their stability; allowance being made for probable backsliding or falling away.
- 2.—Poverty of the agricultural districts.
- 3.—Emigration from Ireland and Yorkshire.
- 4.—Turn-out of the colliers.
- 5.—Increased activity of other religious bodies, by which Methodism has been deprived of its customary monopoly.

We think it requires but a slight acquaintance with Methodism to point out the fallacy of such statements. Now, as to the numbers returned from the different circuits to Conference, to say nothing of the grave charge exhibited against them in the 1st reason, however solicitous the circuit stewards might be that the account rendered should be under the actual state of the case, for the reason given, viz. the proportionate provision by the circuits for preachers' children, yet it is well known that the stewards have nothing whatever to do with the return to Conference of the numbers in society, such being invariably taken from the preachers' schedules, made at the quarterly visitation of the different classes. So that if there be any error here, it rests entirely with the preachers, who can have no inducement to render the account of numbers less than the real facts of the case would supply. Besides, the past year is not the first in which the system of providing for the children, in proportion to the number in society, has been in operation; and the same inducements, if any could have existed to render false statements to the last Conference, must have operated in an equal degree during former years. So that it is really idle to offer any such observations, as shewing the least possible cause for the declension of the numbers in society during the past year. And as to the allowance made in the returns from those circuits where a revival has taken place, we greatly fear that such circuits will be found exceedingly few in number; and, at all events, where such revivals have happily occurred, there will not be found, after all the deductions for probable backsliding, any diminution from the numbers returned by such circuits in the previous year.

We are quite aware that in the agricultural districts a good deal of poverty has been experienced; but, at the same time, we cannot allow that such circumstance has operated *materially* in the depreciation of the numbers in society. We presume that an individual will need as much the consolations of religion during a state of poverty as of comparative affluence; and although it may not be in the power of that individual

to contribute of his substance as he was formerly wont to do, he will nevertheless estimate too highly the privilege and blessedness of Christian communion, as on that account to "forsake the assembling of himself" with the Church of Christ. Such a circumstance would not be deemed a valid reason for such a line of conduct, either by the class-leader of such an individual, or by the preacher in the circuit. We are, therefore, of opinion that whatever influence it may have exerted on the various *funds* of the Society, the smallness of the increase in numbers cannot justly be traced to the "poverty of the agricultural districts."

The greatest stress is laid upon reason third of the series, viz. **EMIGRATION**; and here, indeed, we have something in a tangible shape. We have no doubt that emigration has been rather extensive during the past year; and in the vast number of emigrants, several of our members were doubtless to be found; but we are not aware, and we think it would be somewhat difficult to prove, that the emigration of Methodists during the past year has greatly exceeded that of the former year. Other religious bodies have also suffered from the same cause, and particularly the Primitive Methodists or Ranters, who, notwithstanding the loss they have sustained in the past year from emigration, have, nevertheless, with their very limited agency increased on the former year by nearly two thousand. As to the "turn-out of the colliers" being adduced as showing cause for the small increase, we confess, that although our gravity is not very easily disturbed, we cannot repress the excitation produced on our risible faculties; and we are of opinion that our readers will readily excuse us if, after indulging in a smile, we pass over this part of the subject in silence.

In "the increased activity of other religious bodies" we most sincerely rejoice, as indicating the more general diffusion of Christian zeal. We are not, however, aware that at any period of time it could with truth be affirmed that Methodism enjoyed an exclusive monopoly of success; for, although it is a generally admitted fact in the Christian world that the Methodists, as a body, took a decided lead in regard of zealous exertions to extend the Redeemer's kingdom, and could with great propriety adopt the Apostle's motto "In labours more abundant," it is still an undoubted fact that "other religious bodies" were not without their successes, but, on the contrary, were, by the blessing of Almighty God on their labours, continually receiving fresh accessions to their various Churches. The Church of England has certainly, of late years, been lifting up her head; and those Churches (happily now many in number) in which the doctrines of the Cross in all their simplicity and fulness are preached, are in general crowded with regular and attentive worshippers. We have reason to know, also, that some progress has been made in some of the Churches commonly called Evangelical, in reference to a closer bond of union of the members, by the institution of private select meetings for spiritual conversation and for prayer. And there is good reason to believe, that such Churches have had their num-

bers of late augmented in no inconsiderable degree by many who were once zealous members of the Wesleyan Society, but who, in consequence of matters complained of and exposed in this work from time to time, had become exceedingly dissatisfied, and eventually retired in disgust from the body, leaving many others perhaps equally dissatisfied with themselves, and yet, taking a somewhat different view of the duty to which, under existing circumstances, they are called,—determined still to abide in the *ship*, and by every possible exertion endeavour to get her *righted*; and not until every vestige of hope has departed from their breasts, can they be induced to adopt a different line of conduct.

Those of our readers who are at all conversant with the history of Methodism, know well that the customary annual increase in former years in the number of members in Great Britain, with a much more limited agency than Methodism now exhibits, has been from six to ten thousand; and when we take into the account the amazingly progressive increase in the population, we think ourselves justified in affirming, that Methodism, in the present day, with her mighty apparatus, cannot be considered as exhibiting a truly healthy appearance with an annual increase under 10 or 12,000 souls. In this sentiment we are borne out by one of the preachers in this place, who declared the same truth at a leader's meeting held at the same hour as the meeting in which Mr. Bunting gave the notable reasons before mentioned.

We are aware that there is such a passage in holy writ as "Not by power or might, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts"; nevertheless, we are justified in the expectation of at least an ordinary degree of Divine influence accompanying a faithfully preached Gospel; and under this assumption we think our calculation is rather under than over the true state of the case.

When will our preachers open their eyes to perceive the real causes which operate in producing and accelerating the retrograde movements of Methodism?—Whether they will acknowledge the fact or not, the best informed amongst the people see clearly that what the preachers call the causes of decline have had comparatively small influence, and are scarcely worth mentioning; whilst they cannot fail to perceive that the present unsatisfactory state of both numbers and funds may be traced to far different causes. We cannot doubt for a moment that any of our readers are at a loss to account for the present posture of Methodistical affairs. It has been the chief object of this work to point out the real causes of our present unenviable condition. We need not now repeat them; but we are happy to think that in the sentiments we have expressed from time to time, we have had the approval of scores of men for whose opinions and judgments we have the highest respect.

We anxiously await the perusal of the *printed* minutes of Conference, which may possibly give us occasion to revert to this subject in a future number.

\* The state of the different branches of Methodism we believe to be nearly as follows, viz.—

	Members.
Primitive Methodists, or Ranters	37,000
New Connexion, or Kilhamites	12,000
Church Methodists in Ireland, or Cloneites	13,000
Wesleyan Protestant Methodists ..	about 4,000
	66,000

To which should be added, the  
Independent Methodists,  
Brianite or Bible Christians,  
Tent Methodists.

We are informed by a London correspondent, that when the numbers were first added up at the late Conference in Bristol, there was a decrease upon the last year discovered of about 600! Mr. Bunting said, such a statement must not appear before the Connexion. A preacher was accordingly appointed to re-examine the accounts, and by adding a number on trial, it was contrived to make an *increase* of about the same amount.

The Magazine, also, in the last twelve years, has decreased in the sale from 25,000 copies to about one half,—being this year only 9000 shilling numbers and 4000 sixpenny numbers. The yearly collection has decreased in about the like proportion.

## GLASGOW.

### TO THE EDITORS.

#### GENTLEMEN,

An old Methodist from principle wishes to throw in his meed of approbation to your very useful and much needed publication; for such a mode of information was much wanted in the Connexion, our extensive body having no way of knowing about any matters relating to the numerous societies, except by the Magazine and the preachers, which was exceedingly partial and limited; but through your Circular we can hear of both prosperous and adverse circumstances. It is not long since it came to this part of the country, and its contents have truly surprised many.

I had no idea that the arbitrary conduct of the preachers had been so much experienced in the south, but imagined it to be confined to this northern part—being so far distant from the cognizance of Conference; but, by your valuable publication, I find it is the same in every part where a thirst for power and rule on the side of the preachers is found. But this state of oppression must soon come to an end,—as through your well-timed exertions in the cause of the societies in general, the people will, I trust, be stirred up to seek their rights, and not rest until they have obtained them. As to our preachers, they, for their own good, the good of their families, and, above all, for the prosperity of the cause of God among us, should certainly retrace their steps, and, like their fathers in the Gospel, become the servants of all;—let them not trouble themselves so much about the mammon of

unrighteousness, but give themselves exclusively to the great work they have undertaken. O! the *primitive days of Methodism*,—the golden age! May the Lord soon return and visit this vine.

Every Methodist should avail himself of the Circular for any information worth knowing, respecting the Connexion in general; and those who will not, ought to be priest-ridden, and most assuredly they will. From such riders good Lord deliver thy people, and save thine inheritance!

I have not, gentlemen, written this because I am a disappointed man, having filled almost all offices which the society had to give, but it gives me pain to see our once prosperous and Christian Church languishing. O! sirs, when I look back between thirty and forty years, and compare the old Temple with the new (by the old name), no wonder that I bemoan our present condition; but glory be to the God of providence and of grace, there are yet a few Ezras and Nehemiah's amongst the preachers,—a few Caleb's and Joshua's who will, I trust, arise and save the Connexion from the threatened ruin.

When I began to write, I intended to say something about the trustee concern, for there is no trustee amongst us who has thought upon his situation, but must have discovered the strange predicament in which he stands. The Methodist trust is truly one of a very peculiar kind; however, I shall confine myself to this simple inquiry at present: How is it reconcileable with justice and honesty that a trustee having left the Connexion, either voluntarily or otherwise, should never be invited or admitted to any meeting of his fellow trustees, and still be unrelieved from the responsibility of money borrowed on the chapels for which he may be a trustee? And in case any chapel should be sold for debt, how far what is called Conference, or more properly the preachers, are liable for the deficiency, as the chapels belong to Conference? I will thank you or any of your correspondents to take up this subject, or I may trouble you with a little more on the dangerous and ruinous tendency of the studied, artful, and designing instrument, as a certain lawyer once termed it.

Wishing you and your useful helpers and correspondents every success,

I remain,

AN OLD METHODIST.

Glasgow, July, 1831.

P.S.—A few individuals here, wishing to express their solid approbation of your most valuable Circular, think they cannot do it better than by sending you a Guinea, which is here inclosed.

#### TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE.

SIR,—The account of the late Conference, as contained in the Christian Advocate, has, doubtless, been furnished by a member of your body; it may, therefore, be viewed as a demi-official piece of intelligence. It has been placed before the public;—has become public property;—and, of course, liable to be freely and publicly examined. I have undertaken this task,—not because I have any sinister ends in view, but because I think it my duty to engage in this performance, and because I cannot have a more convenient season than the present, when you, sir, for whom I

have very high and sincere respect, are placed at the head of this immense and respectable community.

I need not tell the president of the Methodist Conference that the prevailing characteristics of the present day are restlessness and instability: a revolutionary movement seems to be taking place in the human mind, and all the principles by which the thoughts and opinions of men have been governed for ages are shaken to their foundations.

Agitated and harassed by this prevailing confusion, dissatisfied with all that is established, and mistaking innovation for improvement, every man is searching after something new; every one is disposed to act his part; and, most men are easily persuaded to forsake the right road to follow after any projector, who has an invention to recommend, or a system to introduce. Experience teaches us that, when the appetite of the world is fixed upon novelty, there are always persons ready to supply it with the food it covets. Suffer me to explain my mind openly, “without mincing the matter.”

Your political as well as theological opinions are pretty generally known. We are aware that you are a friend to order, and ancient institutions;—that the present sweeping national measure, which promises to effect an entire change in the British Constitution, has given you some degree of uneasiness. We know, also, that you have expressed your apprehensions openly and earnestly on this subject a few weeks since to Mr. Richard Watson, whose conversion from radicalism to toryism, one would think, you had calculated upon. And this you had a right to expect, considering that he has been moving in the court-end of Methodism, and enjoying its benefits for some years. But, sir, argue as you will, —reward as you may,—“what is in the bones, will never come out of the flesh.” Hence, Mr. Watson, the author, the editor of your publications;—Mr. Watson, who exposed the learned Dr. Clarke;—who ridiculed the upright, the consistent, Methodists at Leeds;—who “affectionately” addressed the able writers of the unanswerable South London address;—Mr. Watson, not having the fear of the president before his eyes, and forgetting Mr. Bunting’s axiom, “that Methodism is as much opposed to democracy, as it is to sin,” told you, point blank, that he saw no evil to be apprehended from the “signs of the times;” and that, if your fears were realised to their full extent, (meaning, it is presumed, that if the Church of England were abolished, and ancient institutions crushed to the ground,) and that, if the present commotion in the State terminated in a Republic, instead of a Monarchy, we should suffer no loss. What an opinion for a Christian minister to entertain, and to avow! Why was not a *special* district meeting called? Was this *horrible* sentiment communicated to the head of your Conference, I mean, of course, Mr. Bunting?

We are informed that “the business of Conference commenced at Bristol on Wednesday, July 27, at six o’clock.” This appears sufficiently minute, and yet here is an important omission,—an omission of the very thing we want to know. We want to know, what business you transact? Whose it is,—whether your own or ours? I am much mistaken if the representatives, the stationing men, the treasury men, and the secretary men, had not transacted the *principal* “business” during the preceding week.

The business of the stationing committee is, comparatively, very easy. As ministers of the truth, as ambassadors of Christ, they ought to study their master's interest: their sole aim ought to be, the promotion of his glory by the extension of his kingdom. As Methodist ministers they ought never to sit down to 'make one appointment, without consulting the old minutes of the Rev. John Wesley, who says, "It is desired, that all things be considered as in the immediate presence of God. That we may meet with a single eye, and as little children, who have every thing to learn. That every point which is proposed, may be examined to the foundation." &c. Now, sir, I ask you solemnly, whether your brethren, the men of authority, the "legal Conference," (who are designated the cardinals of the Methodist Church,) attend to this positive injunction of their venerable founder? or, whether the above is not to them, an article of condemnation? Mr. Wesley proceeds to inquire, "How may the time of this Conference be made more eminently a time of watching unto prayer? Answer: While we are conversing, let us have an especial care to set God always before us. In the intermediate hours, let us visit none but the sick; and spend all the time that remains in retirement: let us therein give ourselves to prayer for one another, and for a blessing on this our labour."

(The following anecdote, which *I know* is authentic, and which you probably recollect, will help to shew how far this advice is regarded by modern Methodist preachers.

Some years since, (say 15 or 16,) the late worthy, generous, Mr. Brackenbury, of Raithby-hall, with his amiable partner, took apartments in — during the Conference at —. I need not remind you, that he kept an open table, and, that all that would come were welcome there. Mrs. B. had constantly noticed the preachers in their respective prayers address the Deity to instruct them, to guide them where he would, &c. At length this good lady, who, all this time of feasting and petitioning, knew the language of their hearts, spoke thus:—"Gentlemen, why do you thus dissemble? Why play the hypocrite? You do not mean what you say. Your object is not to go where you can *do* most good, but where you can *get* most good. Your aim is to get appointed to the best circuits. Do not, therefore, call upon the Lord to appoint you, when you are conscious, that you seek your own interests and not Jesus Christ's.")

"How far do each of us agree to submit to the judgment of the majority? Answer: In speculative things each can only submit,—so far as his judgment shall be convinced. In every practical point each will submit,—so far as he can without wounding his conscience." "Can a Christian submit any farther than this, to any man, or number of men, upon earth? Answer: It is plain he cannot, either to bishop, convocation, or general council." (Or, what is more, not to Methodist district meetings, especially when unconstitutionally convoked, as at Leeds, or even to Methodist Conference.) Hear this ye men, ye preachers of the Gospel of Peace! "And this is that grand principle of private judgment, on which all the reformers proceeded." "Every man must judge for himself, because every man must give an account of himself to God." "What" continues Mr. W. "may we reasonably expect to be God's design, in raising up the preachers called Methodists?

Answer: To reform the nation, particularly the Church: to spread scriptural holiness over the land." **GLORIOUS DESIGN!** Would to God it were studied disinterestedly, and practised uniformly, in our Connexion.

Here I may naturally inquire, what was the state of the Church, and of the teachers of the people in the Establishment, when these stirring sentences were penned? How erroneously they taught, and how wickedly they lived, is lamentably too well known. The consequence was, that nearly the whole nation, on the main points of christianity, were in total ignorance of all that it most concerned them to believe and know; so that, almost all their religion consisted in their attention to outward forms, or, in other words, their religion consisted in "*going to Church.*"

In this state were matters at the time of the appearance of the Wesleys, the Whitfields, and some few other names in the Church, worthy to be recorded to the end of time. Those holy, able, and truly-devoted men, seeing and feeling the evil that was in the world, sounded the alarm, and called both ministers and people to consider from whence they had fallen. In the spirit of Jeremiah, they proclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." But how was this met by the bishops and clergy of that day? Were they willing to hearken, to inquire, and to return to the good old way? Were they disposed to fulfil their ministerial vow, and afford their aid in the great work, in clearing the sanctuary, and in repairing the breaches of the walls of Jerusalem? They said, in effect, with the Jews, "We will not hearken; we will not inquire; we will not return to the old paths." Their conduct was in unison with this determination. They closed their pulpits against them; spurned them; they spoke all manner of evil against them; and manifested a spirit which, had it not been restrained by just and equitable laws, made in former and better times, would have gladly chained them to the stake, and destroyed their zeal for God in the martyr's fire. The consequence was, that they drove them and their adherents away. The great Head of the Church, however, overruled all this for good. These holy men went out to the highways and the streets. They preached Christ, and thousands were converted under their exhortations.

Had the rulers of the Church been as wise and politic as the Pope, they would have taken advantage of the talents, piety, and zeal, of these great and worthy men;—they would have enlisted them in the best of causes, which the human mind can conceive, and turned their labours to the advancement of true religion. It was in their power to have done this. They might all have combined to work together for God. But all persecutors are blind; they do not know that he can make the wrath of man redound to his glory; that he can make opposition and persecution tend to the furtherance of his Gospel. Hence, these rejected champions of the Cross sought and obtained wisdom and authority from on high, and they determined to obey the God of heaven, rather than these would-be-lords of the earth.

Mr. Wesley inquires whether his preachers had used their talents two sparingly. O sir, what would he say on this subject in our day? He answers thus: "It seems we have. 1. Because *our call*

is, to save that which was lost. Now, we cannot expect such to seek *us*; therefore, we should go to seek *them*. 2. Because we are particularly called, by 'going into the highways and hedges,' (which none else will do,) to compel them to come in. 3. Because that reason is not good, 'The house will hold all that come.' The house may hold all that come to the house, but not all that would to the field. The greatest hindrances to this, you are to expect from the rich, or cowardly, or lazy Methodists." If this was a just complaint in Mr. Wesley's time, how much greater is the evil in ours?

I should not have dwelt so long on your legal rulers' sins of omission, had not "the business of Conference" been spoken of in such a prominent manner. It is pretty generally understood throughout our Connexion now, that your principal business the first week, when you can have your own way undisturbed, is, to secure to yourselves, the circuits which afford the best pay and the least work. Do not tell me, that you will follow the leadings of providence, and that you had no hand in this and in that appointment. Is it not your maxim to remember and to help one another in these affairs? And is it not a very strange circumstance, that your "legal Conference," that is, those who are honoured and elevated annually, by a junto, above their more laborious and deserving brethren, or rather *helpers*, are always to be found in those places where they can be most at their ease, and enjoy the most luxury? I have just said, that your "legal Conference" is elevated by a junto. Believe me, sir, I cannot but think, that were Mr. Wesley to rise from the dead, he would bring down, rather than elevate, a vast number of those, who are "recognized by his deed of declaration, executed and enrolled in Chancery in 1784." What pomp! what an effect this phrase is capable of producing on the Society! And when the preachers delight their ears with a precious morsel of "conference news," what expectations are raised, and what effects are produced! This very act was performed, and these very words were uttered, at Brunswick Chapel, a few evenings since, but the people there are getting too knowing: hence, they exclaimed among one another, "We have had all this already in the newspapers."

I am not disposed to criticise the manner, or impugn your brethren's motive, for speaking of, and dwelling on, the catholic spirit of your Conference;—of your meeting in one common room, and having in view one common object,—the dissemination of Peace throughout the world. The picture is certainly imposing; but, while human nature continues to be, what Adam bequeathed to his corrupted posterity, it is not very likely to be a perfect portrait. In fact, men very seldom, if ever, leave their prejudices and selfishness behind them. Few are free from them, and fewer still, if they have contracted any, are willing to renounce them. And, if individuals have sometimes given proof of having obtained such a victory over themselves, it may be safely said, that no instance has yet been exhibited of a *body* of men following the bright example. As an illustration of this, permit me, sir, to call your attention to the manifest difference of sentiment and behaviour that appear between the preacher Paul, whose "deed of declaration" was never "enrolled in Chancery," and the preacher Bunting. I beg pardon for this slip of the pen,—I ought to have said General B.

We are commanded to render honour to whom honour is due; besides, he has laid claim to this mark of distinction in the presence of many witnesses;—may we not, therefore, infer, that one section of the "business of Conference" was to ratify this martial cognomen: and, surely, no one who knows him will deny that he has as much claim to this title, as he has to some others which he wears. \* \* \* \* \*

I leave his beloved brother Daniel Isaac, who can blow hot and cold, as circumstances may demand, to fill up the blank, while I return to my subject.

I was noticing, when this fit of humour came across my mind, the vast difference in opinion and conduct between our preachers—our gentlemen preachers—and the great, the laborious, apostle Paul. No man can attentively read his epistles, without forming a high opinion of his knowledge of human nature; his delicacy in giving advice and reproof; and, above all other qualities, his uncompromising integrity. Would to God that our preachers,—that all ministers of the Gospel,—were to imitate the character of St. Paul. His writings and his conduct exhibit such a warmth, frankness, and candour; such an unreserved pouring out of his soul; such a free disclosure of his feelings, as well as of his opinions; so much social kindness, with so much divine love; so much tenderness for the persons of men, without ever conniving at their faults, as may be safely recommended to the notice of those especially who profess "perfect love," and whose calling, whose holy calling, bind each of them to say unto others, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."

As these qualities are imitable, as there is nothing enjoined but what is practicable in the land of Britain, as well as in the land of Judea, we have a right to look to our teachers for that example in their lives, which is thus placed before them, and to which they have subscribed on entering into the ministerial office. There is one thing, however, which shews St. Paul's character in a peculiarly favourable light; and, in this point, it appears to me, from the temper and conduct which our preachers have manifested at Leeds on a large scale, and at Liverpool and other places in a smaller way, that our spiritual guides are extremely defective:—I mean, his extreme sensibility of heart, and his rare delicacy in consulting the feelings of others, (even of those who differed from him in non-essentials;) his reproof is never exercised at the expense of his integrity, or to the injury of the Church of Christ.

It must be admitted, that there are many talented men whose blunt honesty is somewhat disfigured by a hasty temper. They are too conscientious, or too cunning, to censure unjustly; they must have appearances on their side; but, knowing the censure to be merited, in some degree, they have rather a pleasure in inflicting the correction: and, though they are not glad the offender deserves it, they are not sorry it is *their imperative duty* to impart it. St. Paul never severely reproved another without inflicting a wound on his own feelings. Gentleness of manner in our apostle was the fruit of his piety: the good manners of some men is a *substitute* for theirs.

This remark will, doubtless, bring to your recollection the painful business, which occupied your attention at the Bristol Conference of 1825, between the late Mr. Thos. Wood and the Metho-

dist class-leaders in this town. This matter will be explained hereafter. It will not astonish you ; but it will astonish others, when it is proved that Mr. Wood was sacrificed to preserve his ruling brethren. Many of us who knew your worth were sorry to find you and Mr. Edmondson forming part of the deputation, and sanctioning by your presence *the unwarrantable, the violent, the studied, flippant reproof*, which Mr. Bunting addressed to the whole body of leaders, *after Conference* had acknowledged the lawfulness of their resistance to our superintendent's assumed power.

I must defer the consideration of the remaining and most important part of my task. It will be my duty to explain to you *why* there is no increase,—*why* your funds are so “depressed,” &c. Before I conclude, I must affectionately and earnestly advise you to adopt the counsel, the judicious counsel, addressed to Conference in the last number of the “Circular to Wesleyan Methodists.” If you will but retrace your steps,—abide by the Constitution of 1797, without adding any gloss to it,—strive together for the faith of the Gospel ;—if you will but accomplish the conquest over yourselves, you will accomplish every thing.

With great respect,

I remain, sir,

Yours in the bond of truth,

TERTIUS.

Liverpool, August, 1831.

#### BIRMINGHAM.

#### TO THE EDITORS OF THE CIRCULAR.

GENTLEMEN,

I have heard “The Circular” stigmatised as “wicked,” “dangerous,” and as being supported chiefly by those who have been, but who are not now, “of us.” I am a Methodist, and one who likes to form an opinion for myself, and, notwithstanding the opprobrious names with which some choose to designate the Circular and its friends, I am inclined to believe it will yet prove the little David destined to destroy that Goliath who has exalted himself in the councils of Methodism, and who is now bidding defiance to those laws of liberty by which the people should be governed. With these sentiments I fearlessly cast in my lot among you, and with delight hail every effort of the people to recover their rank in society. You have been informed that our quarterly meetings are not so easily *managed* as formerly ; you have been made acquainted with the debts on our chapels, with the growing expenses of the circuit, and with the difficulties of paying our way. One of your correspondents from this town stated in your last number that the finance committee would develope its plan at the March quarterly meeting : that plan, and the only plan which could be devised likely to succeed, and which was supported by all the preachers, as well as others, was brought forward in a long report at the above meeting. This report stated a fact which ought to have some influence on the minds and conduct of those who are busily employed in destroying the simplicity of Methodism.

It stated, that notwithstanding they had called the “trustees, leaders, and other influential members of the Society together, that if more money was not raised, either a preacher must be dismissed, or a chapel sold,—that the Society *itself* could not support four married preachers ; it was therefore necessary, not only that the *classes* should increase their subscriptions, but that an *annual sermon* must be made in every chapel, and a *list of subscribers formed from the hearers*, (not members) and with these resources the committee doubted not *four preachers might be supported* ; but even then they could hold out no prospect, except by an *additional fund*, of purchasing furniture for the fourth preacher.’ Such are the circumstances of the Birmingham circuit, the population of which is 140,000 souls!!!

An important change in the mode of payment of our preachers was made, viz. that to enable the stewards to form a more correct estimate as to the expenses, it was resolved, that in future each married preacher should be allowed £125 per annum for board, quarterage, coal, and candles, letters, and stationery, medical attendance, servants, and other uncertain (as to amount) items. The quarterly meeting reserving £105 besides the above sum to meet other expenses, such as house rent, taxes, painting, removing preachers, children, district meetings, &c. &c., so that you see we are determined whoever comes to this circuit must not exceed in expense £230 per annum ; and to prevent all possibility of the society being led beyond this, the society stewards are not permitted to spend more than £2 per quarter on any preacher's house, nor can the circuit stewards without the consent of a quarterly meeting. This alteration in the mode of paying preachers is in conformity with the times ; it certainly must be more satisfactory to the feelings of the preachers, and which is of greater importance, it enables a society to estimate its own expenditure. The plan is so simple, and embraces so many important considerations, that I hope it will be followed by every circuit in the kingdom. Since this measure was carried it has been stated, from certain quarters, that we have reduced the income, consequently the circuit will be injured so as to prevent GREAT preachers coming among us ;—be that as it may, I think we shall not regret the absence of such men who consider £230 too little to defray all their expenses. I find other circuits are adopting the same system.

I regret I have not given an exact statement of all the items ; the secretary read them so quick, it was not possible to take them down in order, but should you wish them I can procure them. Wishing you all success in your arduous undertaking,

I am,

Gentlemen,

Yours, &c.

A. Z.

Birmingham, July, 1831.

P.S.—I inclose you a sovereign, my annual subscription, towards the expense of carrying on your spirited, and truly Methodistical, publication. May the time soon come when the Conference legislators shall return to original simplicity, and thereby render its existence unnecessary.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS OF CIRCUITS.

## TO THE EDITORS.

DEAR SIRS,

The occasion of this letter arose at the leaders' meeting at Brunswick Chapel, on Thursday evening, 11th instant,—the Rev. Jabez Bunting in the chair.

A leader having removed, it was requisite to choose another in his stead, and the chairman named an individual to the meeting. A member of the meeting said that he supposed the person nominated would, as usual, remain over a week, in order that the brethren not knowing him might make inquiry as to his character and fitness before they voted for his reception.

Mr. B.—“I know nothing of your local regulations—I cannot attend to them; I have served nearly seven apprenticeships to Methodism, and you cannot teach me anything relating to it, and I beg you will not attempt to force me from *my way*; you may *kill* me, but you cannot *turn* me.”

Another leader said there was no wish to offend the chairman, but it had always been the practice of that meeting to have a week to make inquiry as to the character of those proposed.

Mr. B.—“To inquire into his character is *my* business. I would not bring a man here to put him in charge of eighteen souls, for whom *I am responsible to God*, if I had not made inquiry into his character.”

The person proposed to the meeting was then received.

So far as the manner and strong language of the reverend gentleman are concerned, it appears difficult to account for them, as both the individuals who remarked upon the custom are thorough-going preachers' men, and this the chairman well knew. It is just possible that Mr. B. has returned from Conference with at length a full conviction (in the lamentable results) of the folly of the course into which he dragged that body in 1827; and this being the first meeting he has attended since his return, his chagrin appears to be too great to enable him to keep his temper even with his friends.

The law relating to the receiving of leaders is as follows:—

“The nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the leaders' meeting.”

Whether or not Mr. B. can be taught anything that is new I know not. One thing is clear,—that in his exposition of this law he teaches not only that which is *new*, but also utterly absurd.

It is well known, that previously to 1797 the preacher used to appoint whom he would to the office of leader; but as he only remained in a circuit for a short space of time, it is manifest that he must be a very bad judge of character, and that many persons would, most likely, be made leaders with whom the other leaders would not be likely to act in unison.

This is sufficient to shew the reasonableness of the leaders having the power to receive or reject the persons proposed by the preachers.

I conceive the exposition of this law to be,—I, the preacher, have examined the individual now nominated, and believe that his knowledge of the Scriptures, his piety, and soundness of doctrine, are such as to entitle him to a place among you who

have to shepherd the flock of Christ. He lives among you, and your acquaintance with his walk and conversation, and repute, must be much greater than mine who am but a stranger, and who, generally speaking, only see men at such times and in such situations as enables me to form, at best, but imperfect conclusions. Do you, among whom he lives, think him such an one as you can receive cordially as a brother and fellow labourer?

In a small town or village, where all persons are more or less acquainted, the answer to the question might be given immediately, although my opinion is, that so weighty a question ought not, in any case, to be answered without due consideration and inquiry. But in Liverpool and other large places, where comparatively few of the leaders know anything whatever of the individuals proposed, it becomes imperative upon the meeting to be doubly careful that the unavoidable ignorance of the preacher is not imposed upon.

The practice alluded to, so far from being in any sense *contrary* to law, appears to me a wise and salutary regulation for *fulfilling* it.

My exposition and Mr. B.'s do not at all agree. *He* says, “you may vote at once, for *I* alone am responsible.” *I* say, “take care how you vote, for the very circumstance of your being called upon to do so involves you in responsibility both to God and man.”

Leaders declare by their votes that a man is fit to take charge of souls, and incur no responsibility!!! You are, indeed, Mr. B. teaching the world something *NEW*.

I conclude this already too long epistle by stating, that Mr. B. declared some time since, that he attached very little importance to the votes of such meetings. No wonder that it is so, if they vote as lightly as he would have them.

Yours, very respectfully,

Liverpool, 22d August, 1831.

IGNOTUS.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

“HONESTUS,” of Nottingham, is received, and shall appear in our next. We shall be glad to receive his future favours.

“V. S.” has favoured us with a second communication: we should have been glad if either of them had been suitable for our columns.

“EZRA'S” continued kind exertions in furtherance of our designs are fully appreciated.

“CYRUS” has our best thanks: we are sorry that room could not be found this month for his communication.

“ZENO,” of Manchester, in our next.

We would advise certain *ultras*, who are in the habit of threatening some of our agents with the discontinuance of their countenance and support, and endeavouring to persuade them that it is contrary to their interest to continue the sale of our work, to desist from such a line of conduct, as they are not at all likely to succeed in their attempts, and they may probably be exposed in a way that will not be very agreeable to them.

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The “Circular to Wesleyan Methodists,” for 1830, twelve numbers, stitched in a suitable cover, is now ready.

Published the last day of every month by W. HARDING, 3, Paternoster-row, London, and WORRALL and TAYLOR, Clarendon-buildings, Liverpool; to whom Communications for the EDITORS may be addressed, *post paid*.

# The Circular

TO  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS,  
FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XXI.

30TH SEPTEMBER, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

## MINUTES OF CONFERENCE, 1831.

WE stated in our leading article of last month, that an examination of the *printed* Minutes might, possibly, give occasion to our reverting to the subject there treated upon. Since then we have had an opportunity of perusing that important publication, and shall offer no apology for putting our readers in possession of a few of our thoughts on the subject.

We stated that the precise increase in the Societies was rather difficult to ascertain, owing to the cautious and uncertain manner in which the preachers spoke upon that question when interrogated; but that from what we could learn, we understood the increase in this kingdom to be from four to six hundred! The Minutes, however, set this matter at rest; and the statement they give us is as follows:—

Total No. in Great Britain and Ireland, 1831..	271,589
Ditto.....ditto .....	1830.. 271,488

101

The total increase in Great Britain and Ireland, during the past year, is therefore discovered to be ONE HUNDRED AND ONE!!! the result of the joint labours of 992 itinerant preachers, and of more than ten times that amount of local preachers.

In our last number we noticed the principal reasons assigned for this paucity of increase, and endeavoured to exhibit their weakness, we trust, to the satisfaction of our readers. The only allusion to this matter in the "Minutes" will be found in the fifth paragraph of the Pastoral Address to the Societies, which is as follows:—

"The increase in our numbers this year, has not risen so high as we desired and expected. In Great Britain it has only amounted to five hundred and twenty-seven. The continued pressure of the times, and the bustle and dissipation of a general election, have been very unfriendly to the progress of the work of God; and extensive emigration has removed very many members of our Societies to distant parts of the world."

Our readers will perceive that there are but three reasons here assigned, viz. Poverty,—General Election, and Emigration;—the first and last of which we noticed in our number for August. We shall, therefore, now content ourselves with a few remarks on the additional reason presented to our view in the "Minutes," viz. "The General Election."

This, like the rest of the series, which we have before noticed, is not by any means satisfactory; on the contrary, it does appear to us to be the weakest of the whole,—the "Turn-out of the Colliers," perhaps, excepted; and, like some of the other pretended causes, has rather a libellous aspect on the body than otherwise.

We are not ignorant of the bustle and dissipation attendant upon a General Election; but we think that those individuals who are, by such circumstances, turned away from the holy commandment delivered unto them are, in general, those on whom religion can have exerted but little of her powerful and saving influence. Such persons may, undoubtedly, be found in all religious communities; but we do hope and trust, for the credit of Methodism, that her sons have "not so learned Christ," as to hazard the loss of "the pearl of great price" for any such temporary excitement. No! we are decidedly of opinion that the Methodist body would be little indeed affected by any such general commotion, and in this opinion we are borne out by facts. How was it at the General Election of 1826? Did the bustle and dissipation of that Election operate to prevent the usual increase in our Societies? A few words, quoted from the Minutes of 1827, will suffice.

The Pastoral Address of that year contains the following passage:—

"The increase of members in our Societies, in the course of the past year, is more than Eight Thousand; and the pecuniary contributions towards carrying on the work of God at home, and in behalf of our Foreign Missions, considering the pressure of the times, are more than ordinarily liberal."

The above is, we think, quite sufficient to disprove the assertion in the Minutes of 1831, as to the General

Election having operated, in any considerable degree, to diminish the numbers in our Societies; unless it can be shewn that there was any thing peculiar in the last Election to those which have preceded it. We believe there was, indeed, this peculiarity attending it,—its duration, in nearly all the places where members are elected, was much shorter than is customary, which, it will be allowed, is a very favorable peculiarity, and further confirms us in the view we have taken on the subject.

Nothing is said *directly* in the "Minutes" on Reason No. 1, in our last publication, as to the numbers in Society not having been returned in a proper manner, that is to say, in full tale to Conference; but our readers will find at page 83, a curious question, under the head "NUMBERS IN SOCIETY." It is this:—

Q. XXVI.—"Can any better method be adopted for receiving an accurate annual return of the number of members in our Societies?"

A. I.—"The superintendents are directed to return in their quarterly schedules the *precise number*, without any abridgment or deduction, of those to whom, after due and sufficient probation, they or their colleagues have actually *given tickets* in their respective circuits.

II.—"The circuit schedules for the preceding June, September, December, and March quarters, shall be carefully examined by the chairman at every district meeting in May: and the *whole number*, without alteration, of those who appear to have received society tickets at the March visitation of the classes, shall be entered in the District Minutes, in connexion with the circuits to which they belong, and reported by the chairman at the ensuing Conference, to the persons appointed for that purpose.

III.—"A copy of the circuit schedules for the June quarter in 1832, which can only be filled up in the interval between the district meetings in May and the ensuing Conference, shall be forwarded to the chairman of each district on or before the second Monday in July, that he may bring it to the Conference, together with the schedules for the four preceding quarters."

Now what, we ask, in the name of common sense is all this parade about? Undoubtedly it is inserted with the view of inducing a belief in the members of the Connexion, that the numbers have not in the last year been properly returned, so that the exhibited increase does not shew the actual state of the case; and those who take this view of the matter will rest quite satisfied, and cry out with the preachers "all's well," without troubling themselves to make inquiry into the business; and, if the preachers succeed in this, their object is gained,—inquiry is stifled.

We cannot imagine that any of our readers will suffer their eyesight to be dimmed by any such "dust." They know well, that printed schedules are provided, and forwarded by the Book Committee, to the superintendents of circuits, which are regularly filled up by the preachers at every quarterly visitation of the classes. These schedules contain an exceedingly correct and minute account of the state of the Societies, and are exhibited at the district meetings and at the Conference.

The answer, therefore, to question xxvi. "Can any better," &c. should have been "No. The method recommended by the Conference of 1820, and then passed as a standing rule for our future guidance in such matters, being full and explicit, it is only a

waste of time to say any thing further on the subject; but, for the special benefit of those preachers, who may be forgetful of their proper duty, we agree to reprint our excellent rule of 1820."

The rule above alluded to is as follows:—

"In order that the state of the work may be constantly under the eye of the preachers, we agree to revive, uniformly, the good old custom of keeping quarterly schedules in every circuit, each of which shall contain a correct statement for the quarter to which it belongs, of persons admitted on trial,—New members fully admitted into Society after due probation,—removals into other Circuits,—Deaths,—Backsliders,—Conversions,—Number in the Bands,—and total number of Members then in the Society. The book steward shall prepare and furnish to every circuit, a sufficient number of printed forms of such a schedule, to be filled up by the preachers, in reference to every distinct class, during their quarterly visitations:—and from these each superintendent shall draw up every quarter one general schedule, containing an account of all the Societies in his circuit, in relation to the several particulars above mentioned. These general circuit schedules each superintendent is expected to produce whenever required so to do, at the annual district meeting, or at the Conference."

Now, we confidently ask our readers, whether our answer to question xxvi. is not more proper and consistent than the answer given to that question by the Conference of 1831? What need of further legislation on a subject so ~~fully~~ provided for by a former explicit rule of Conference? But, as we before said, there was a purpose to answer by it, and all this parade of question xxvi. and its elaborate answer, is to beget faith in the people in the statements made by the preachers as to the causes of the smallness of increase in the Societies during the past year. "Numbers not correctly returned" sounds very well, and especially when corroborated by a minute of Conference providing against a recurrence of the evil!! A little investigation, however, is often necessary, even into the movements and proceedings of those who are, in general, least suspected; and, we think, this is all that can be required to place this matter in a right point of view.

There are some other matters, connected with the Minutes of 1831, which claim our attention; but, for the present, we must defer the subject, only observing, that there is nothing whatever in these "Minutes" which can cause us to vary, in the least, from our former opinions and views of the Methodism of the present day. What these are, our readers have had repeated opportunities of judging.

#### NOTTINGHAM.

#### THE LEEDS CASE.

MR. EDITOR,

I have carefully read over every one of your Circulars addressed to the Wesleyan Methodists. Having *two ears* and *two eyes*, and for aught I know to the contrary, one reason why the great Creator gave me *two* of these, might be in order that I might see and hear two sides of a disputed question. I have done this in the late disputes of the *organ question* at Leeds, though in some cases I have been at considerable trouble to get at the arguments published on the side of the people. There is no difficulty in getting those sold at

the Methodist book-room, as they are advertised on the cover of the Magazine, and as the preachers will very thankfully furnish us with them; but, unfortunately, they publish only one side of the question. After having read these carefully through, the conclusion which I have come to is, that the conduct of the special district meeting held at Leeds, and the Methodist Conference, relative to that case, was a most flagrant violation of the rules of pacification. That the preachers should carry such a measure in the face of such an overwhelming majority on the other side, would seem as if they were destitute of all sense of propriety and common courtesy. The leaders' meeting opposed it by a majority of sixty to one. Then a strong memorial, signed by sixty, out of sixty-two of the local preachers, was prepared and sent to the leaders' meeting, against the measure. After this, a regular district meeting of the travelling preachers decided against it by a majority of thirteen against seven. Yet, after all this, the Conference granted permission to a few rich trustees to erect an organ, and an organ was erected; but sure I am that neither you nor any of your readers will ever envy the *eyes*, or the *ears*, or the *feelings*, of those persons who can sit to hear it, after having been the cause of its being placed there, and of the awful consequences which followed. But it is with the conduct of the Conference we have principally to do, in the flagrant violation of their own laws.

Whether the Methodist connexion will tamely submit to this, *time must prove*. My opinion is, that they will not. Our people are beginning to listen to the facts of this case with *both ears*, and to look at it with *both eyes*. For a season, the people generally heard only one side of the question; or, perhaps, from their overwhelming charity and kindness of heart, thinking the preachers "*too wise to err, and too good to be unkind*," they have refused to hear anything upon the subject till the publication of the Leeds Protestant Methodist Magazine, and more especially your *Circular*, came into circulation.

Some *hundreds* of our members have left us, and joined other religious communities, in consequence of the conduct of the Methodist Conference in this business; and some *thousands* now in the connexion, are exceedingly grieved, and mourn in secret; but they are waiting and praying, and hoping that the Conference will soon be so convinced of their error, as to acknowledge it, and restore to us what they have unjustly taken away,—our *chartered privileges*, which our forefathers of 1795 and 1797, after much labour, and toil, and expense, procured for us.

You do well to advise our people to continue in the society. If they intend to save the vessel they must abide in the ship; at least, I beseech you, and the whole Methodist connexion, through the medium of your *Circular*, to use every lawful method to get restored to us our former privileges, before the case be given up as hopeless.

#### TRUSTEES OF CHAPELS.

I have paid some attention to this subject for many years, and, notwithstanding the efforts and exertions which have been made to relieve the case of embarrassed chapels, it appears to me that the state of chapels in our connexion, as a whole, gets worse and worse. And what is most astonishing, that in defiance of all the rules and regulations upon this subject, and the appointment of a

chapel-building committee, without whose consent no chapels are to be built or enlarged, yet there have been many chapels lately erected that will, in all human probability, seriously involve the trustees or their children in pecuniary difficulties.

The Chapels generally pay the interest of the money borrowed for a few years, and in some cases have a considerable surplus. Now, if the trustees could take this surplus to lessen the debt, they might bring themselves into easy circumstances. But, according to the present plan, this is impossible. While the preachers preside in the meetings of the trustees, *they* will find ways and means to dispose of the surplus. To get hold of this, they will suggest the propriety of keeping a tolerable *debt* upon the premises; that this will furnish the preachers with arguments in preaching the anniversary sermons, and the chapel stewards with arguments urging the people to take seats; *besides* that, the Methodist body *is one*, and all the chapels and trustees in the same circuit should, as far as possible, make one common cause. And, moreover, it is the interest of the circuit to get its character raised to a high standard in the esteem of the preachers, and in order to this—that the salaries given to the preachers, and such *houses* and *furniture* should be provided for them as to command the attention of men of the greatest *talent* in the connexion; and in order to this, you must advance the *board* and other *items* equal to the circuits of the highest respectability. Here, persons are waiting and wishful to receive any surplus that can be spared from any chapel in the circuit,—such as *circuit stewards* and *society stewards*, who, perhaps, are already greatly in advance, and know not where to look to supply the increasing wants of travelling preachers. And, providing there are some of the *trustees*, or even a great majority, who are desirous or even determined that the surplus shall positively be appropriated towards lessening the debt, this cannot be done according to the present system, as lately acted upon, if the travelling preacher, who is chairman of the meeting, is opposed to the measure. The consent of the meeting must be obtained, and if the preacher have reason to suspect there is a majority in favour of the measure, he can refuse to put the motion. This plan is now becoming pretty general, and I think loudly calls for some new regulations to secure the privileges of both trustee, quarterly, and leaders' meetings.

#### LOCAL PREACHERS.

I have long considered this as the most excellent and useful class in the community of Methodism, more especially as they perform a vast of labour, and that without fee or reward. These have been the pioneers of the itinerants—preparing their way—breaking up the ground before them—braving all dangers—and exposing themselves to a deal of reproach and persecution,—esteeming it the highest honour to save souls from death. I have known some of them, after labouring hard the whole week to maintain a large family, rise early on the sabbath morning and, after praying and reading for several hours, have walked ten, fifteen, or twenty miles, and preached twice, and, on some occasions, three times.

I believe there are a few circuits where the local preachers are allowed (from a collection made for that purpose) the hire of a horse, when the distance is beyond a certain number of miles, as agreed upon in that case. This, or some similar plan, ought to be

immediately and universally adopted in every circuit, for the benefit and comfort of the local brethren who are poor; and if, after all, he *preferred* to walk, in order that he might have as much as would furnish him with *shoes* and other extras for his sabbath journey, he might have the privilege of doing so.

But there is another circumstance, and though it cannot be read without painful feelings, yet, as a fact, it ought to be known, that the reproach may be wiped away from us as a body. I have received the information from indubitable authority. A local preacher, of unimpeachable character and acceptable abilities, has, through excessive poverty, been obliged to go to a *pawnbroker's* shop on Saturday night to borrow a coat to preach in on the Lord's day, and, upon returning it on Monday morning, to pay a certain sum for the use of it. Surely these things ought not to be! The time, I think, is *fully come* when there ought to be established in every circuit a **LOCAL PREACHING FUND**; and the local brethren should call a meeting in every circuit town, in order that it may be established *forthwith*;—persuaded I am, that many of our local brethren who are in opulent circumstances (perhaps all of them) will rejoice at the opportunity of becoming honorary members, and not a few of our wealthy members and hearers will become annual subscribers. It is very probable that this plan will not meet with much encouragement from the travelling preachers; nay, it will be well if *some* of them do not oppose it, and perhaps will designate a meeting of the brethren for such a purpose,—*factious* and *unconstitutional*: but what have the local brethren to do with that? let them be firm to each other, and only persevere, and the thing will be done.

#### TRAVELLING PREACHERS.

I am very far from being one of those who would "*muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.*"—"The labourer is worthy of his hire."—Nor do I mean to say that any pious, faithful, laborious minister of the gospel of Christ has a greater income than he deserves: nay, it is difficult to say what a man deserves of the church, who is instrumental of the conversion of many souls to God. But his salary should be proportioned, in some measure, to the ability of the people with whom he labours, or rather in proportion to their *willingness* in connection with their *ability*, thus to support him. This was the plan adopted in the beginning of Methodism. But this is not the plan now adopted in the various circuits generally; this is evident, from the very circumstance that the regular income of many circuits comes far short of their expenditure:—hence the accumulation of large circuit debts, and the consequent frequent *appeals* to our people for private subscriptions and increased contributions. It is well known, that in many cases a preacher on his first coming to a circuit, or as soon as possible afterwards, has to set on foot a subscription, to pay off old debts; and if he be a man of their choice, and to whom they are attached by the strongest and best ties of affection, the people give liberally; they consider the preachers as begging to pay off debts which they had no hand in contracting, and the preachers are not backward in urging the same argument, though they may be conscious, in their own minds, that their successors are doing the same work and using the same arguments in the circuits they have recently left.

There are some excellent advantages in paying the preachers (as in our connexion) according to their families, and in finding them houses, furniture, coals, and candles, and in paying all levies and taxes, house bills, doctors' bills, servants' wages, their own quarterage, with their wives and children, letters, paper, &c. &c. But this is very capable of great abuse. It is not every one and their families who will be as frugal and economical, when the expense is to be paid by public bodies, as if it were their own. There is one fact which I believe cannot be successfully contradicted, that whatever rules the Conference have made relative to the preachers' *board*, their own and children's *quarterage*, and servants' *wages*, they generally get as much as they can: and there is another fact equally notorious, viz.—that whatever pretence or plausible reasons they may make for an advance of wages, &c., yet when these causes cease to exist, the advance is continued. I am aware there are some few exceptions to this; I have heard of a superintendent preacher who, when the circuit was overwhelmed in debt, subscribed towards the removal of the debt, and, also, was the first to propose the lowering of the weekly board. It is well known that the money allowed for weekly board in many circuits is double to what it was twenty or thirty years ago; but some preachers, sooner than they will make any *sacrifice*, will suffer the circuit to get one or two hundred pounds in debt, besides drilling the leaders in a most painful manner, to get more money from the poor members.

I am informed, that a certain superintendent stated in a large leaders' meeting, that it was the duty of every member in the Methodist society, if his income were only five shillings a week, and he had a family to maintain, to give a penny a week and a shilling a quarter to support the preacher. One leader gave him a hint, that in a case just referred to, a *penny* would buy a few potatoes that would relieve the cravings of the children for food. It is said, that the said preacher has an income of his own, and from the connexion, of from five to six hundred pounds a year, and it is doubtful whether he gives anything, either for class-money or ticket-money, and surely there can be no just cause or lawful impediment why the preachers should not subscribe weekly and quarterly, as well as the poor members of society. Indeed some have said, that the Methodist preachers *are the greatest beggars and the worst givers in the world*; but I hope this is not true. It is certain that many of them are men of great property, in addition to the large income they receive from the connexion; but, in the judgment of charity, we hope that they give to the poor and needy, in a private way, a proportional sum out of their yearly income, and that they do it so privately that their right hand knoweth not what the left is doing in acts of charity and benevolence. But there is one thing very observable, namely,—that they give very little, as a body, towards our public charities, with the exception of the school funds, towards the support of which they are obliged to subscribe, by the rules of Conference. In casually taking up a Report of the *Chapel Fund*, I only found *four* preachers who had given anything towards it, and some of these are far from being the richest men, or travelling in the richest circuits. Our kind friends who subscribe to this fund should say to the preacher, when called upon for their subscriptions, "Sir, I do not see

your name in this list; come, I will lend you a pen and ink, put down your name, and then I will give you my subscription." In looking over the report for the "auxiliary fund" for last year, we only find the names of eight or ten travelling preachers who have subscribed anything to it; and it should be remembered, that this fund is for the sole benefit of *preachers and their families*; one would charitably hope that *every preacher* would have given something towards assisting a poor brother in distress.

I have often wondered why the Conference have not made rules and regulations, requiring all the preachers to subscribe to these funds—seeing they will not do it without such *laws and regulations*: the *fact* is, that the *junto* who govern the Conference do not themselves subscribe to these funds, though it is well known that they travel in the best circuits, and some of them possess very considerable property.

We live in very eventful times, and as *reform, retrenchment, and economy* are become the order of the day, both at home and abroad, I see no just cause why something should not be done in Methodism:—provisions are low, and the remuneration to the labouring poor is lower still: this is one reason why the preachers ought to submit to a reduction in board, especially in those circuits where it has been advanced from ten and sixpence to sixteen, or from twenty to *thirty shillings* a week; and then those poor persons who have a family to support, and can get only *five shillings*, or a little more, a week, to support them with, I should hope, might be honourably exempt. Another advantage would arise from this, that no leader would be deterred from inviting the *poorest* person to meet in class, which has frequently been the case.

HONESTUS.

Nottingham, August, 1831.

MANCHESTER.

TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

When you commenced your labours by endeavouring to develop and correct the evils into which, within the last few years, Methodism has fallen, in common with many well wishers of the connexion, I augured well of the result. But, although I am willing to allow purity to your motives, diligence to your exertions, and ability to your compositions, with some partial success to your object, yet am I forced to a doubt, whether you can finally succeed in accomplishing the renovation of ancient Methodism, so long as the administration of all its affairs, civil, ecclesiastical, and financial, remain altogether in the hands of the preachers. Wherever may be found a *Hydra*, or an *Augean* stable, nothing less than the application of herculean power, steadily and perseveringly directed, will be available to destroy the one, and to cleanse the other.

From what I have been able to collect, as to your immediate and specific purpose, it has been two-fold, the recognition of Methodist law, as established in 1797, and the retraction by the Conference of the proceedings at Leeds, which were in direct violation of it. As far as this object goes, I entirely approve of it; but from the lofty pretensions of the governing men in that august assembly, and their tenacious adherence to the antiquated dogmas of *inherent rights*, there is but little probability of their yielding an acquies-

cence to either of these requirements. The partial good I admit to have followed from your publication is this, that since its commencement the preachers have been more cautious, or rather, less despotic, in their government of the societies, than for some time previous. But little discernment is necessary to foresee, that the moment you cease to exercise your inquisitorial office, and when they are no longer under the dread of public exposure, there will certainly be an immediate recurrence to lawless authority, for which, unfortunately, numerous precedents may be pleaded. Nay, I will venture to add, that if the editors and patrons of your work, worn out by protracted and bitter disappointments and deferred hope, retire from the field of honourable conflict, without accomplishing their purpose, the despotic rule of Conference will be more rigorous than ever: instead of whips, we may expect scorpions. I do not say this because I think Methodist preachers worse than other men, but because such a consequence is the natural result of power, by whomsoever exercised, when unsuccessfully opposed; and I fancy the preachers themselves would think me guilty of great adulation, should I place them above the infirmities of our common nature. Whatever arguments may be adduced in favour of *inherent rights* of ministers to govern, much stronger ones may be urged in proof of the *inherent* disposition of men to hold fast and exercise all the authority they have acquired. If so efficient a lever as your publication furnishes, fails to heave away the mass of rubbish with which the wheels of Methodism are now clogged, the ministerial charioteers of Conference-supremacy will laugh to scorn all future attempts of individuals to battle with their usurped authority.

Gentlemen, you have narrowed your objects within a compass too limited; you have confined your efforts to one or two points, instead of striking at the root of the evils of Methodism. In your pages the despotism of superintendent preachers in their circuits has been pointedly and ably exposed; but, at least as it appears to me, your partiality for Methodism, as such, has restrained you from fearlessly attacking the *system*, which is the source of our calamities. You have said, "Give us the constitution of 1797, and we will be satisfied." But you have left out of view these considerations;—that the Conference, even by this arrangement, has the uncontrolled direction of the yearly collection, of the preachers' fund, of the immense sums collected and subscribed for the Kingswood and Woodhouse-grove schools, of the chapel fund, the contingent fund, and other funds, amounting in the whole yearly to several score thousand pounds; in the disposal of which, those who pay the money have little or no influence. I again say, that to the fidelity of Methodist preachers I would surrender as much, or more confidence, than to any other distinctive body of men; but to give them such an authority in the direction of these various sums, applicable only to their own personal advantage, is to place before them a temptation, with which no man or body of men ought to be entangled. If to this be added the power of Conference to appoint preachers to circuits, which vary as much in their comforts and emoluments as the dioceses of England, without the approbation, and in numberless cases against the wishes of the circuits,—it may be demanded, what hierarchy, not excluding the Roman Catholic, ever assumed a power more dominant than the Methodist priesthood?

These, gentlemen, are some of the topics that must be brought to view, if you would serve the cause of Methodism and Christianity. I perceive in several instances you have admitted articles, of some of the sentiments of which, you have professed to disapprove; whether your liberality and views extend to the admission of compositions which controvert the propriety of the above state of things in the Conference constitution, I know not. If they do I shall be happy to afford my humble efforts in shewing their incongruity with the prosperity of the connexion, and with the interests of Christianity. If not, I shall take my respectful leave, with a wish, more extended than my hopes, that you may succeed in restoring the Methodist society to a healthful state of being.

Manchester, 20th August, 1831.

ZENO.

\* \* \* If our Correspondent will refer to the 1st number of this periodical, he will find that one of the subjects on which we proposed to treat, is, that "Ministers ought not to be encumbered with secular and money matters." His further communications will therefore be acceptable.

#### PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

##### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

In the first number of your "Circular" you promised to furnish your readers with a history of "Primitive Christianity in the first three centuries as compared with Methodism in 1829." I beg leave to remind you that you have not redeemed this pledge; at least not in a distinct form. In your very able article on "the Church Government of Wesleyan Methodism," which occupied several of your numbers last year, we have, it is true, an occasional glance at the subject, but not all that would be expected in, and embraced by, your respectable Journal, "which," as you boldly avow in your last number, "you are, under the blessing of God, enabled to wield for the restoration of original Methodism, by a thorough reform of the abuses introduced by the authority of Conference."

I shall now, with your permission, wave some other interesting matter which I have in hand, for the purpose of supplying this apparent oversight, and thus throw in my humble aid to your scale of usefulness.

In reading the New Testament attentively and impartially, and taking a serious view of the present state of christianity, we are unavoidably struck with the vast difference between what was at first instituted by our Lord, and what is now practised by those who are called his followers. While we, therefore, admit that ecclesiastical history is valuable, because it connects and illustrates these subjects, we must conclude that the history of religion is peculiarly so to a real christian.

When Jesus Christ was interrogated by the Roman Governor concerning his kingdom, he replied, "my kingdom is not of this world." This is a maxim of unspeakable importance in his religion; and almost every corruption that has arisen, and by which this heavenly institution has been debased from time to time, may be traced, in one way or other, to a departure from that great and fundamental principle of the christian kingdom. It may, therefore, be of importance to the inquiring believer to keep his eye steadily fixed upon this proposition, as that alone can enable him to form a right estimate of the progress of primitive christianity

during the first three centuries, and of its revival during the last century.

With respect to the original constitution of the Christian Church as founded by the Apostles of our divine Lord and lawgiver, there can be no doubt of its being what is usually called congregational. By this term we are to understand, that each congregation of christians which meets in one place for religious worship is a complete church, and has sufficient power to act and perform every thing relative to religious government within itself, and is in no respect subject or accountable to any other church. "It does not appear," say the advocates of this plan, "that the Primitive Churches were national;" they were not even provincial; for, though there were many believers and professing christians in Judea, in Galilee, in Samaria, in Galatia, &c., yet we never read of a provincial church in any of those places: and in the days of the apostles, bishops and rectors were so far from presiding over more churches than one, that sometimes a plurality of bishops presided over the same church. Philip., chap. I, v. i. It seems plain, then, that the Primitive Churches of Christ were properly congregational; but the busy mind of man, ever prone to intrude into the province of his maker, and so tenacious of every principle that proposes any degree of importance and consequence to the creature, adopted those measures which considerably altered the form of its government. Hitherto each christian assembly was an independent state, acknowledging no head but the Son of God, nor any rulers but its own immediate officers, formed by the exigency of their own affairs, and solely constituted by their authority. About the middle of this century, the respective christian assemblies of each province met together by their representatives—persons commissioned from amongst themselves to examine into the general state of their ecclesiastical affairs, and empowered to establish such rules as might be judged expedient for the promotion of the welfare of the whole. These assemblies were by the Greeks called *Synods*, and by the Latins *Councils*, and the laws there enacted *Canons*: names which in every succeeding age occupied a very conspicuous place in ecclesiastical history.

With certain qualifications, such a confederacy might have been productive of much good; and something of this kind obtains to the present day in the purest churches of Christ. Circumstances, however, soon evinced the fondness of the human heart for the exercise of dominion, and how dangerous it is for any one man to transmit his own right, even by delegation, to the hands of another. Human nature is every where and in every age the same; and "the best human nature is but human nature at best." That prudence and humility which dignified the members of the first councils soon disappeared: even in this early age a *jus divinum* was erected as an imaginary basis for usurped dominion; and that power, at first acknowledged to be derived from the people, was now claimed as an undoubted right.

The designing doctors of the church, in order to give some shadow of propriety to their proceedings, persuaded the undesigning and credulous people, that there existed a parallel between the Jewish and Christian officers; that the pastor, or bishop of the Church of Christ, held a rank equivalent with the priesthood; and his assistants in the ministry, with that of the ordinary priests. Thus the primitive beauty of christianity was defaced, and a gaudy

pageant, the device of ambitious men, substituted in its stead. And now, in the nineteenth century, it is attempted to carry the parallel much farther: it is proposed to consider the Wesleyan Methodist Church as a mighty army, with a mighty general at its head. We are taught, however, by experience, that all attempts to amend the designs of infinite wisdom, and to render the work of omnipotence more secure, by the feeble efforts of frail man, is a positive injury to the Church of Christ.

From a source so prolific as the inventive capacity of ever restless aspiring man, what an endless variety of opinion might be expected! Losing sight of the dictates of their divine guide,—the unerring prophet of his church,—the professing christians of this age introduced the doctrines of the heathen philosophers, and endeavoured to incorporate, with the pure principles of Christ, their vain philosophy, and hereby reared an image, like that in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, composed of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and clay, materials so heterogeneous, that the probability of a combination never could have been formed but in the brain of the wildest visionary.

A detail of all the particular sects which appeared at this time would far exceed the limits of this sketch, but the principle divisions, which distinguished the heretics of this age, may be reduced to the following: The Asiatic and Egyptian christians, who explained the doctrines of the gospel according to the principles of their respective systems of philosophy; and a sect supported by a number of illiterate and obscure men, who brought themselves to light by nothing but the extravagancy of their pretensions, and the absurdity of their doctrines. Two other sects arose from among the Christian Jews, known by the names of *Nazarenes* and *Ebonites*, who joined judaism to christianity, and considered an observance of the institutions of the Jewish lawgiver to be as essential to salvation as faith in the doctrines of the gospel. The distinguishing peculiarities of the various other systems are too multifarious to be enumerated. Some announced themselves as divinely commissioned to add perfection to the principles laid down by Jesus. Others, in order to account for that mixture of good and evil which every where prevails, became Polytheists, and created different deities. Others held the most chimerical speculations respecting the person of the Son of God,—differing as much on this vital point as Dr. Adam Clarke and Mr. Exley do from Messrs. Watson, France & Co.: the latter, we know, call the opinions of the former, heresy! The lives of some of the leaders of these parties were distinguished by the utmost severity of morals, whilst others were men of corrupt minds, countenancing all manner of lasciviousness by their principles and practice.

Not only were the external circumstances of the church materially affected, but the minds of officious men were particularly exercised about its internal concerns; that simplicity which was in Christ, and which gave real dignity to his Church, had been differently esteemed, and considered by some to be detrimental to the progress of the gospel. Whilst the heathen worship was performed in sumptuous temples, amidst the splendour of the most pompous ceremonies, the worshippers of the true God were regardless of public magnificence, believing that truth would prevail by its own intrinsic and unadorned energy, and contented themselves with wor-

shipping God in the spirit. Others made an attempt to remove the prejudices, and conciliate the minds, of unbelieving jews and gentiles by a dangerous accommodation, an accommodation which has proved inimical to the cause of real godliness, and the sad effects of which are now sensibly felt, even after a period of 1600 years. Hence temples, altars, splendid garments, gestures, feasts, &c. &c. &c. From hence it is perceivable how dangerous a thing is the exercise of human policy in the things of God, and how daring must that mind be which attempts an amendment of the design of heaven: The change hereby accomplished has been like the substitution of a painted harlot for that of a beauteous and chaste matron. Amidst all these abounding corruptions of christianity the pure unadulterated truth had many firm and manly witnesses.—Men who adorned the doctrine they professed by the most exemplary uprightness in their lives, and were not afraid to seal their testimony with their blood.

I reserve the residue of what I intend to say on this subject till next month, lest I should be charged with the fault of modern authors and platform orators, who make up in *length* what they want in *depth*. The history of the Church of Christ, including its legitimate discipline, may be comprised in a few pages; but this mode of doing business would not bring much gain to our Isaacs, our Beccams, and others, who carry their trade in their pockets, and impose it in the way of a gentle tax on our unsuspecting loving members; but this will not always be endured; the time, I am convinced, is at hand when they will no longer cry out “great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

CYRUS.

The following short sketch of the Primitive Church of Christ during the first three centuries is not wholly original, but it shews the subject in a condensed form, and will probably prove acceptable to your readers.

1.—All that embraced the gospel and were converted to God, were separated from their old communities. 2.—They were received into the church by baptism. 3.—God raised up, in most of the churches, pious men to minister in holy things. There were two orders of them. First, deacons, appointed by the churches to receive the collections, take care of the poor, visit the sick, provide things necessary for the sacrament, and help occasionally in administering it. And most, if not all, of them preached when there was a necessity for it. Second, presbyters, or bishops: these men were fully qualified for the ministry—ordained and set apart to it—had a right to exercise themselves in every office of the church. But the bishops were the heads of the churches, and the presbyters were under their direction. Both equal in regard to their qualifications, and being dedicated to all the services of the church, only the bishops were the superintendents of the churches. 4.—These men were chosen by the churches, and appointed to their different places by the mutual consent of ministers and people; and this appointment was generally sanctioned by the presbyters of neighbouring churches,—assisting at their ordination. 5.—In most churches there was one bishop, and several presbyters and deacons, to help forward the salvation of the people. 6.—Churches were independent of each other;—they agreed in fundamentals, but in rites and ceremonies, and in doctrines not essential to salvation, they often differed. Even members of the same church were not always agreed in these. But this did not hinder their love to each other. The unity of the church was preserved, while they only differed in matters of this nature. 7.—Schism was considered by them as a very great sin. They defined it thus: “separating from their ministers and brethren without a just cause.” It was schism to separate on accounts of rites and ceremonies, or because they could not all agree in doctrines which did not concern their eternal welfare. A separation was lawful in these three cases: First, when the bishop turned apostate, on account of persecution or from any other cause. Second, when he preached heretical doctrines, that is, contrary to what all the churches agreed to be essential to salvation. Third, when he was wicked in his life and conversation. If presbyters or deacons gave place to any of these evils, they were excommunicated, unless they gave sufficient evidence of a sincere repentance. 8.—Very strict discipline was established, and all the members of the church were very exact in their attendance on the ordinances. 9.—The bishop, with the church, were very strict in receiving members: and censure, reproof, suspension, and

excommunication, were faithfully administered when they were necessary. 10.—No bishop could be the head of two congregations; unless it happened, that in the suburbs of cities, the ordinances were appointed in chapels of ease, for those that lived at a distance; but in that case, the whole church often met together on special occasions. In the three first centuries only the city of Alexandria was in this state. 11.—When different presbyters met in synods with the deacons, the churches had laymen chosen to attend as their representatives. This kept up a good understanding between them and their ministers. 12.—All the ministers of the churches were either supported by the labour of their hands, or by the free donations of the people. 13.—Though the different churches were independent of each other, yet they were closely united. Their ministers often preached for each other. They counselled in particular cases with one another.

In this state the primitive church flourished abundantly, and was a proverb of reproach and love.

### YORKSHIRE.

#### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

The pursuit of health has induced me to spend the summer months in Cheshire and the neighbouring county of Lancaster. In the large town of Manchester, and more particularly that of Liverpool, I have attended the Methodist chapels very frequently, and have time after time heard *very much* of the great *unanimity* and *orthodoxy* of the preachers; of the kind and brotherly feelings, which they, as a *body of ministers*, have *ever borne toward each other*, and, though my memory is at best but an obtuse one, such declarations have brought before my mind's eye, matters which I have heard and read, which do not very exactly coincide with such representations. For instance, as to orthodoxy;—the Rev. Thomas Gill, an aged minister, (who was lately stationed at Thirsk, in Yorkshire,) is well known to have been a staunch advocate for the doctrine of universal restoration, or that after a period of suffering in another world, the *impenitent will finally be admitted to a state of eternal bliss*, agreeably to the notion of Shakspeare, which he puts into the mouth of the ghost in Hamlet. This doctrine, I have been told by several preachers, the reverend gentleman has often defended in Conference. Again, Dr. Adam Clarke is openly charged by many of his brethren in their oral declarations, and by some in their printed writings, of holding opinions concerning the incarnation of Christ, &c. which they say necessarily lead to Unitarianism.—See Watson's, Boyd's, and Moore's Pamphlets on the subject. On this head I might cite many other instances, but at present forbear.

On brotherly love, or charity, I may remark the following instances, of what seem to me to be at very antipodes.

The late excellent and indefatigable Dr. Coke, it is well known, published, under the sanction of Conference, a commentary on the Bible. His friend, Dr. Adam Clarke, says of that work, "Though the major part of the notes are here published *without* the author's name, yet all the marginal readings and parallel texts are entirely omitted. The absence of these would be inexcusable in any bible beyond the size of a duodecimo."—Gen. Preface to Dr. Clarke's Bible, page 11. The late William Bramwell, an eminent minister, in a circular letter written by him,\* says to his community, "We may be proud, envious, malicious, covetous, self-willed, brawlers, and triflers, given to jesting, yea, tipplers; we may oppose the real work of God, may turn hundreds out of the way, and yet remain travelling preachers."—See Bramwell's Life, vol. 2, page 138, second edition.

\* The letter alluded to will be given entire in our next number.

A few years ago, a venerable minister, whose name I understood to be Reynolds, in a sermon which he preached in one of the large chapels in Leeds, declared that a great many of the young preachers of the present day were men of habits and dispositions *totally different* from the primitive preachers, and such as John Wesley could not have approved; and moreover, declared in a most biting and sarcastic pun, that "he feared many of them had more seals to their watches than to their ministry." I might quote numerous passages of a similar complexion, to shew that there is a leaven of illiberality among the preachers toward each other; but as the employ is not a pleasant one, I will on the present occasion only refer to the cantharadistical acrimony of the Rev. Isaac Keeling towards the Rev. Abraham Farrar, in the preface to his admirable sermon on the loss of the soul;—the Rev. Daniel Isaac's dash of bitterness, banter, and ridicule, directed against the Rev. Messrs. Moore, Bunting, &c. in his printed circular letter, addressed and sent to all the preachers, a copy of which now lies before me; and of the Rev. Valentine Ward's sarcasms on Mr. Crowther and others, who found fault with his prodigal expenditure of money, in forcing Methodism into Scotland.

Of your Liverpool preachers I know nothing—of some, not even their names; but both before and since the Conference, I have heard much of what I have slightly animadverted upon; and I cannot help thinking that preachers who indulge in such declarations, must be aware how many instances of a contrary complexion are familiar to many of their hearers; and as it regards myself, if I did not know a *single instance* to gainsay them, the frequent repetitions of such declarations would be equivalent to the admission of some unsoundness or lack of veracity in the cause; for as Lord Kames has well observed, "It is in some degree a plea of guilty, to be over hasty or solicitous to make a defence."

These few remarks are meant in no offensive sense; that they will do any thing to lessen the practice of sounding their own praises by such as are accustomed to do so, I am not vain enough to hope; but they may, perhaps, caution some hearer not to trust implicitly to the declarations of every man who would be thought a cynosure. On a future occasion I may resume the subject, and am, gentlemen, yours, respectfully, and

Owles.

Harrowgate, September 12, 1831.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"X. Y. Z." is unavoidably postponed.

"O. P. Q." shall be inserted previously to the usual time of holding the missionary meetings.

Want of space again obliges us to postpone the continuation of "Strictures on Mr. Beecham's Essay."

Received since our last,—from Rochdale.....£6 6 0  
Chester.....0 10 0

"Portrait of a Christian Pastor," copied from the Christian Advocate, shall, if possible, appear next month.

"JUNIUS," of Chester, on the Kingswood and Woodhouse Grove Schools, was received too late; it may, however, be expected to appear next month.

The "Circular to Wesleyan Methodists" for 1830—twelve Nos. stitched in a suitable cover, may be had in London or Liverpool.

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# The Circular

TO  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS,  
FROM

TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LEADERS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND PRIVATE MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

No. XXII.

31ST OCTOBER, 1831.

PRICE 3D.

*The Editors respectfully inform their Correspondents, that no communications will be published which relate to the conduct of Preachers or others, or to cases of misrule and oppression in particular societies, unless verified by at least two respectable signatures. The names of the parties forwarding such communications will not be published; but it is necessary to the character of the present publication, that nothing should appear in its columns which cannot be properly authenticated or explained.*

## CASE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE LOCAL PREACHERS' QUARTERLY MEETING IN THE LAMBETH CIRCUIT, LONDON.

THE substance of a letter addressed to the Rev. David M'Nicol, late superintendent of the Second South London Circuit, by the secretary of the local preachers' quarterly meeting of that circuit, in consequence of his endeavours to remove him (the secretary) from that office; together with an *appeal* made in August last to the leaders' meeting at Lambeth chapel, to prevent his expelling the same individual from the society: with an account of the results of these proceedings, and some remarks upon the whole.

24th March, 1831.

Sir,

You will, perhaps, agree with me that occasions may arise, when even the Christian is compelled to forsake his habits of seclusion and retirement, and come forward in the most open manner, to defend himself against attacks that may be made upon his character; as also attempts to deprive him of his rights and privileges as a member of a Christian community; and, that in the just exposure of those who strive to injure him, and in the maintenance of the rules of the religious community to which he may have attached himself, he is discharging also a public duty.

What those rights and privileges are, as associated either with mere membership, or possession of office in the Wesleyan Methodist society, I do conceive the commonest exercise of common sense cannot fail, with ease, to discover. Clear and simple in the extreme are the expositions of our doctrines by Mr. Wesley; and equally as clear and intelligible are the rules of our society, as fully and finally established in the year 1797; and to these causes the unparalleled success which has attended the exertions of our society are, in no small degree, attributable:—prosperity and increase ever keeping pace with a rigid adherence to rule:—decrease and pecuniary difficulty, and a host of other evils arising just in proportion as there has been a departure from the laws and usages of our system, as fully recognised and established at that period.

The present state of Wesleyan Methodism generally, but the picture of distress which this circuit presents especially, is a striking evidence of this, and shews the inevitable consequence, when a few persist in attempting to obtain dominion, and to establish it, in upholding and maintaining certain novel and extraordinary principles of church government, in their essence of this arbitrary and despotic character, and partially developing themselves in the special district meeting at Leeds. The authority and rights of which, however, the Rev. Richard Watson has affectionately endeavoured to establish, in an affectionate address to some of the best friends of Methodism in this and the adjoining circuit; and to myself, as being humbly associated with them.—In which he claims for *you*, (and certainly you have manifested no little avidity in seizing it) for *himself*, and for his own order in the system, that power which is as contrary to the genius and character of Methodism, as the very attempt indicates the entire want of the commonest principles of honesty,—considering the constitution of Methodism is already fully defined in the rules of 1797, which decidedly oppose his and your pretensions.

That there has been no reserve on my part in opposing, in the most public manner, these principles, I readily admit; but in so doing, I have exercised no more than an undoubted right as a member of the meetings I have attended, unless, indeed, there is now no responsibility attaching itself to office, and men are to be used as mere tools, under the entire controul of a power which is to be allowed the authority either to make use of or to reject them, as shall best suit *its* interests. And such are the claims and tendencies of the principles against which I have given my most public and decided protest.—They aim at the destruction of all local authority;—they would invade the rights, by making the privileges of membership and of office to depend entirely on the caprice of those whom they point out as the only authoritative persons in our system; and such have been already induced to acts of public as well as private outrage, in which all the intolerance of popery has undisguisedly and unblushingly manifested itself, but which these said principles can fully justify.

Your own conduct towards myself, furnishes additional evidence in support of the truth of these assertions.

I am obliged, with pain, to confess I strongly suspected from the beginning that your main object in remaining in this circuit after you had effected its division, was, for the express purpose of establishing this arbitrary power by a series of precedents. That any opponents to them you would make as unhappy and miserable as it was possible. That you would try by indirect means first, to induce them to quit office and retire from the society; and, that if these failed, then you would by direct force accomplish your purpose.

The period soon arrived in which I was satisfied that I had formed no incorrect opinion. Your first act was in publicly recommending me in the vestry of Lambeth chapel, to depart from the society, without giving one reason why I ought so to do. This was soon followed with threatening, and in the vestry of Southville chapel said, you would make me suffer, without stating for what, only giving some distant allusions to my openly avowing certain sentiments. I, of course, treated this threat as I had done the former recommendation, with the contempt it merited; but that could not free me from the effects of your Jesuitical intrigues, which compelled me soon, out of self respect to retire from the office of trustee steward at Southville; and which aimed, also, and succeeded, in some respects, at removing me from other offices I sustained in connexion with that chapel. At length, to accomplish, as you conceived, with certainty, your plans of extermination, you aim a blow which, at the same time that it tended to cast reflections on my moral character, should lower me in the eyes of my own family, and create unpleasant surmisings amongst my neighbours, as also in the society at Southville. I allude to your denying me that right and privilege which, before you entered this circuit, I enjoyed, of occasionally preaching there; and thus you left no alternative to myself and family, but to submit to all the inconvenience and pain of wandering about to different places of worship in the neighbourhood, rather than appear to acquiesce in the propriety and justice of the course adopted towards me.

It has, at length, become necessary that measures should be adopted to stop you in this course of persecution, as shall compel you to have a regard to the established usages of Methodism, and the rights and privileges of its members; and as shall prevent you, by unfair and unmethodistical means, accomplishing any purpose affecting my own or the happiness of any member of this society.

The attempt to remove me from the office of secretary to the local preachers' quarterly meeting of this circuit, by nominating another secretary, at Christmas; the assertion, that you were only acting in accordance with established usage in so doing; and your persisting against remonstrance, and by unfair means to carry your point, are the subjects for present consideration.

You well knew that the office you were anxious to deprive me of I had been appointed to about a year and a half before, by the local preachers themselves, one of whom proposed and another seconded the proposition—yourself merely putting the motion, which was carried unanimously.

This mode of appointment met with no opposition from you at that time. And why? Simply because it was quite in accordance with established usage. And as to the period of continuance

in office, it usually varied from five to ten years; and when a change did take place, it generally arose from the individual himself wishing to quit the office.

When, therefore, at so early a period *you* nominated another to succeed me, I naturally inquired your reason for a mode of procedure as novel as it was unexpected, and in this opinion two of the oldest and most esteemed local preachers of this circuit fully concurred, and opposed the motion you put for my removal.

You, however, persisted in asserting that it was quite in accordance with former practice to change the secretary every year at Christmas; and, that it appertained also to the superintendent to select and nominate another. In this opinion your senior colleague, of course, to be consistent with family principles, agreed, as did also a local preacher who, you asserted, belonged to this circuit. This individual, therefore, with your colleague and yourself voted, as you conceived, me out of office, without a single local preacher of this circuit sanctioning such conduct by a single vote.

On more mature consideration, and on further enquiry, I have thought it right to hesitate before I allow your views to be carried into effect. Any personal motive that you may have in reference to myself, I am not going to discuss; but *your* assuming the right to choose and appoint that officer which the local preachers themselves possess the power of selecting, together with the entire departure from truth in your assertions about established usage; and also that the local preacher who voted for my removal, having the right to vote in this circuit, are reasons quite sufficient to justify the resistance I intend to offer.

In addition to what was stated by myself and the local preachers of this circuit, I have received letters from the West and North London Circuits, the only two I have applied to on the subject, as to the mode of electing the secretary of their quarterly meetings, and the length of his continuance in office.

The first letter is from the secretary of that meeting in the circuit you last travelled in.

“ Hadlow-street, Burton-crescent.

“ Dear Sir,

In reply to yours of to-day, I have to inform you that it is not, and that it never was ‘the custom in the London west circuit to change the secretary of the local preachers’ quarterly meeting annually, at the Christmas quarter.’

“ I am, dear Sir,

Yours, truly,

ROBERT ECKETT.

“ March 11th, 1831.

“ P. S.—There have been only *two* secretaries to the local preachers’ quarterly meetings in this circuit for the last *twelve* years.”

The following letter is from the north circuit.

“ 66, Paternoster-row, 16th March, 1831.

“ Dear Sir,

“ In answer to your inquiry ‘whether it ever was, and now is the custom in our circuit to change the secretary of the local preachers’ quarterly meeting annually, at the Christmas quarter,’ I have to say, that no such custom has existed in my remembrance, or does now exist. I was secretary for many years—brother Crossley succeeded me, and continued in the office five or six years, when

he wished to resign; the local preachers requested Mr. Pyne to take the book, and he now acts as secretary.

"Yours, affectionately,

T. CORDEUX."

Had you just entered upon the work of the ministry, some allowance would be made for ignorance; but when it is recollected that you have been above twenty years an itinerant preacher,—that for the last five years you have been in London, where you have not once witnessed what you assert is of annual occurrence at Christmas, and that in my own appointment, a mode widely different to the one you are aiming to establish, had been adopted. Your assertions, therefore, as to this part of the affair, are as devoid of truth, and unworthy of credence, as are your other assertions about the local preacher who voted with you, belonging to this circuit, and having a right to vote in it.

That individual I had never seen before, but supposed what you stated was correct, and, therefore, did not insist on seeing his credentials. Had they been produced, however, it would have been discovered that he did not belong to this, but to the adjoining (First South London) circuit, where he resided, and was regularly planned as a local preacher.

If this principle of incursion be admitted, the local preachers here have an equal right to vote in his circuit, as well as anywhere else; and we may be employed to go the whole round of the London circuits, and enter other circuits, the times of meeting varying, and be made instrumental in carrying any measure, by our votes, which we may wish to accomplish: a course of procedure no rule or usage of Methodism can possibly sanction. Wherefore, I reject the said vote, because the individual had no right to give one in this circuit, and furnishes me, in addition to the other sufficiently obvious reason, with an argument, why I should retain, as I intend to do, the secretaryship of the local preachers' quarterly meeting in this circuit, until they desire my removal, or I shall myself discover an adequate cause for relinquishing the office.

In conclusion. It will be found, I apprehend, that neither intolerance nor intrigue will now accomplish the objects in which they were once so successful. In the present day, the eyes of the people are becoming steadily fixed on the *actions* of the individual, not on the assertions of right, nor the justification of bad conduct on principles of divine right, (so called), surrounded with all the solemnities of mystification.

And, Sir, if conduct like that I have attempted to expose be suffered much longer to be perpetrated, so opposed as it is to the rules, and usages, and spirit of Methodism, and the benevolent precepts of Christianity, the force of public opinion is such, that in infinitely less time than some people seem to imagine, the whole fabric of that edifice which once bid so fair for glory, extension, and perpetuity, will sink beneath the weight of universal and unmitigated reprobation.

I remain, Sir, with the utmost sincerity,

• • •

Lambeth, 24th March, 1831.

Whether to this letter is attributable the course adopted by the superintendent, the writer is not prepared fully to determine; however, no further step was taken by open and direct means

through the local preachers' meeting, to effect this object of removal from office; but a more effectual way soon presented itself to the fruitful mind of the superintendent, by denying me the right of private membership, which, of course, rendered me ineligible for that, as well as any other office in the society. The following appeal, therefore, to prevent this object also being accomplished, was sent to the leaders' meeting at Lambeth Chapel.

*The very interesting sequel of the above case shall appear in our next number.*

### NUMBERS IN SOCIETY.

Up to the time of our last number going to press, we had not found sufficient leisure to examine the statement given in the Minutes of the last Conference, as to the total number of members then in the Society in Great Britain.

We have pleasure in now being able to lay before our readers the following tabular statement, shewing the increase or decrease during the year in the various districts, into which Great Britain is divided by the Conference.

Districts.	1830.	1831.	Increase.	Decrease.
First London .....	9028	8735	.....	293
Second ditto.....	10357	10572	215	.....
Kent .....	5299	5329	30	.....
Norwich .....	5252	5189	.....	63
Lynn .....	3453	3521	68	.....
Oxford .....	3994	4038	44	.....
Northampton .....	2600	2475	.....	125
Portsmouth .....	3535	3575	40	.....
Guernsey .....	2389	2347	.....	42
Devonport .....	5023	5091	68	.....
Cornwall .....	14366	15773	1407	.....
Exeter .....	3014	3108	94	.....
Bristol .....	7290	7423	133	.....
Bath .....	6920	6826	.....	94
First South Wales .....	1938	2027	89	.....
Second ditto .....	3644	3711	67	.....
North Wales .....	4871	4409	.....	462
Birmingham .....	10042	10244	202	.....
Shrewsbury .....	3818	3747	.....	71
Macclesfield .....	8364	8268	.....	96
Liverpool .....	7520	7441	.....	76
Manchester .....	16447	16418	.....	29
Halifax .....	8693	8450	.....	243
Bradford .....	7161	7546	385	.....
Leeds .....	13304	13520	216	.....
Sheffield .....	9382	9425	43	.....
Derby .....	6005	5768	.....	237
Nottingham .....	11176	10997	.....	179
Lincoln .....	8296	8429	133	.....
Hull .....	8778	8675	.....	103
York .....	7806	7445	.....	361
Whitby .....	4011	3728	.....	283
Darlington .....	4730	4545	.....	185
Newcastle .....	10422	10687	265	.....
Carlisle .....	3247	3372	125	.....
Isle of Man .....	2340	2300	.....	40
Edinburgh .....	1764	1760	.....	4
Aberdeen .....	809	767	.....	42
Shetland .....	1330	1435	105	.....
	248418	249119	3729	3028
		248418	3028	.....
		701	701	.....

## THE CIRCULAR

The Minutes of the Conference of 1830 stated the numbers of that year at 249,278; the Minutes of the last Conference state the true numbers of 1830 to have been 248,592. Now the fact is that neither the former nor latter statement is correct, for, although the chief errors in the account of 1830, as exhibited in the "Circular" for September 1830, are corrected in the present year's Minutes, there still remains one, which was pointed out by us in the number before alluded to, which has not been noticed by the clerks of Conference in making up the total increase of the past year:—we allude to the number of 174 placed, erroneously, in the Minutes of 1830, to Ashford, in Kent, that place not being a circuit town. The statement then, assuming the numbers given in for the different circuits this year as correct, will be as follows:

Total number of members in Great Britain	
in 1831, as per Minutes	249,119
Ditto last year, as recorded in the	
Minutes of the present year	248,592
Deduct Ashford as above	174
	248,118
Total increase in Great Britain	701
Decrease in Ireland, as per Minutes	426
Total increase in this kingdom	275

The statement which we gave in a recent number of this work, that if the calculation had been made of those only who were *bona fide* members of society, instead of eking out the numbers by adding candidates on trial, the result would have been a considerable decrease, has been, during the last month, as our readers will perceive in another column, authenticated by a travelling preacher in the West of England; and circumstances which have come to our own knowledge, in reference to the return of numbers from the two circuits in Liverpool, (as we can readily imagine them to form no solitary case), confirm us in the belief of that statement.

At the last Quarterly Meeting of the North circuit, the superintendent announced a falling off, from the number returned to the previous Conference, of 85 members; and in the South circuit the number which appears in the last Minutes opposite to that circuit, is 60 more than the superintendent says he returned to Conference. In the Lambeth circuit also, Mr. M'Nicol, the late superintendent, left upon paper, as the number of members in that circuit, 885. Mr. Entwistle, the present superintendent, has just been round the circuit, and, after the most diligent search, can only discover 804; and there can be no doubt of there having been similar cases in other circuits. We may, therefore, safely affirm, that during the past year the numbers in society in this kingdom have actually decreased, notwithstanding the gracious revival which has happily taken place in Cornwall, by which, in one circuit only, (that of Camborne) an increase is exhibited of 980 members; and yet, with all this extraordinary help,

that the result of the labours of such a vast body of official men as Methodism exhibits, should be an actual decrease, (making every proper allowance for emigration, &c.), must clearly prove to the most superficial observer, some great disarrangement in the machinery of Methodism, which was wont to exhibit her annual increases of 8 to 10,000 members.

## INHERENT RIGHTS.

## TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

Although much has been said by the advocates of "*inherent rights*," latterly assumed by the Wesleyan preachers, the subject, to me, is still encumbered with perplexing difficulties, inasmuch as, First,—The itinerant aspirants claim *exclusive privilege*, and resolutely refuse to share such prerogative and distinction with their modest and more unassuming, though, frequently, more experienced and talented brethren, the local preachers; a considerable proportion of whom are not only equally acceptable and useful as ministers of the Word of Life, and are, therefore, fairly entitled to equal privilege and honour, but many of them sustain also the office of class-leader, and, doubtless, have a far more legitimate claim to the boasted title of *pastor* likewise, than the itinerant preachers.

Secondly. The official local members of the quarterly meetings, from amongst whom the itinerants are selected, and whose suffrages and sanction are indispensably requisite to their eligibility for the general work as travelling preachers, do not, however, select and send them forth to be "*lords over God's heritage*," but to be *labourers* in the vineyard, and servants of the churches, for Christ's sake. Nor do the quarterly meetings, I will venture to affirm, invest them with *absolute power*, or ever dream of recognizing the principle of "*inherent rights*," as now so vauntingly assumed, and tyrannically exercised, by the travelling preachers.

Thirdly. If this assumed ministerial power be "*inherent*," according to the general acceptation of that term, namely,—*innate*,—*inborn*,—*abiding in*,—&c. how comes it to be *passive* at one period, and *active* at another, in the ministerial life and labours of one and the same individual? That during the period of his ministrations as a *local preacher* previous to his going out, and after he ceases to travel, this principle is *null and void*,—a mere nonentity,—but while he sustains the dignified character of *itinerant preacher*, it is *active* and *potent*! These are some of the difficulties, which, to me, are inexplicable.

That the reader may have a pretty clear comprehension of the subject, I will state a few cases by way of contrast and illustration, out of many of a similar kind that have fallen under my own observation within the last 30 years, during which period I have repeatedly filled (with only one exception) every office connected with one of the large Methodist societies.

About 20 years ago, when the mania for subdividing the circuits began to prevail, and the Connexion apparently required an annual extra number of preachers, the superintendents were eagerly looking out for young men whom they deemed eligible for that office. About that period, three young men were recommended to go out, by the quarterly meeting of the circuit in which I reside. I will state the circumstances as explicitly as I can, giving, at the same time, a brief outline of the history and character of each. As it is not necessary, on this occasion, to furnish the names, I shall merely adopt a letter as a mark of distinction, only observing that the three individuals are about the same age, and were recommended by our quarterly meeting about the same time.

A. was the son of very creditable parents, by whose means he had received a good common education to qualify him for the trade to which he served an apprenticeship, and during which he was received on the local preachers' plan. He was a very industrious youth of talent and promise,—of unflinching integrity and consistent zeal,—and there was no doubt of his deep and sincere piety. He was, moreover, a very acceptable preacher, and his

labours in the ministry had been crowned with success. He was unanimously approved, and recommended by the quarterly meeting as a proper person to be exclusively employed in the work of the ministry, in which he was quite willing and free to engage. From some cause, however, not known except in the precincts of the Conference, he was not received by that body as one of its members. He has, therefore, continued to improve and employ his talents, (which are, perhaps, of a higher order than those of a majority of the travelling preachers,) within the local sphere of his native circuit, where his pious and unassuming gratuitous labours continue to this day to be both acceptable and useful to the people, amongst whom he has to minister the Word of Life. I may here notice that his pecuniary circumstances, although somewhat changed, are not materially improved. His health and strength not being equal to the laborious toil of the employment to which he served his apprenticeship, he has for many years held a situation as a servant in a merchant's warehouse, by which he is enabled to provide things honest and necessary; and in addition to his personal services, as leader and preacher, to contribute his pecuniary mite also, towards supporting the itinerant preachers and their families.

The early history and temporality of B. were very similar to those of A., with whom he was a contemporary on the local preachers' plan. He was brought up a mechanic, but had quitted the employment for a situation as servant. He was approved and recommended by the quarterly meeting, accepted and called out by the Conference, as a travelling preacher, and thus continued to labour in that more extended field of operation for several years. But whether he was not altogether of the right sort to suit the "powers that be," or they did not exactly suit him, I know not; but so it was, that after travelling for some years, he voluntarily retired from the field, without *pension*, and returned to labour in his native local vineyard, without fee or other reward, than that which arises from an approving conscience, and the honour which cometh from God, who condescends still to own his labours. He now fills a similar situation in life to that which he occupied previously to going out, and is a very respectable local preacher. So acceptable indeed, that when it suits the convenience of the privileged order of the itinerancy to call him to supply their pulpits, which is sometimes the case, the congregation do not regret the absence of the *titled minister*, nor even that of the still more *Reverend Chief Pastor*; and yet, although he can minister to the edification of the Church, and is, moreover, the leader of a class, he neither enjoys the distinguishing titles, nor the exclusive privileges, of the *Reverend Order of the "Inherency!"* Indeed, such assumption on his part would be deemed, by those self-exalted and inflated men, most unpardonable presumption.

In giving a faint sketch of C. the third individual under notice, I am aware it behoves me to proceed with all due caution and reverence, inasmuch as he has been raised above his brethren to a dignified station, from whence he looks down with a supercilious air of haughty indifference, even upon his former benefactors, who compassionately rescued him from the iron grasp of poverty, and furnished the means to his present elevation, where he is now swelling, full plumed, in the high places of the Connexion, and spreading forth his dazzling phylacteries in the presence of an astounded people, amongst whom he occupies the grand distinction of a *District Chair*, and of course is privileged to enter even the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the Wesleyan Conference. But in that dread assembly, composed as it is exclusively of personages of the same order, and mostly of a similar origin as himself, but who, from various causes, assume, for the most part, a higher grade, and claim superior caste; he modestly, takes a subordinate station as an officious devotee, dancing attendance to, and eagerly courting the smiles of, the superiors, who, in the cant slang of Conference-jargon, are self-styled the "Heads of Houses." Or, in other terms equally characteristic and likewise strictly correct, where he appears also as an obsequious subaltern, obediently awaiting the orders, and craving the meanest drudgery, if, perchance, he may be fortunately successful to obtain the most distant approving nod from his High Mightiness, "THE GENERAL," of the band; whose smile gives life,—whose frown is dreaded as a withering blast, or as a deadly foe,—and whose fiat governs the Conference, and *breaks*, or *makes*, at pleasure, the laws of the Connexion!

But to pursue the history of C. This extraordinary personage, although by his compeers considered less honourable than themselves, is the son of a vacillating *talking* Methodist, who, twice in his life, has sustained the office of class-leader;—a poor man, (who would not be the less esteemed by the wise and good, merely on that account, but) who, for want of that prudence and discretion in his general conduct, and in the management of his family and domestic affairs, so essentially necessary in the formation of the Christian character, has been involved in pecuniary difficulties the greater part of his life;—often a pensioner on the funds of Methodism, and sometimes a pauper upon those of the parish. Thus circumstanced, C. availed himself of the privilege of a sabbath-school, his only alternative for obtaining any education. In that school he was not only taught the rudiments of learning, but divinely instructed also; and, eventually, brought to a profession of the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Thenceforth he was required to engage as a labourer, in a humble sphere, in that extensive section of the vineyard, where Methodism finds ample scope for the employment and exercise of any and every talent, great or small, of all her children. Rising, by the help of friendly aid, and the practical improvement resulting from the various gradations, and peculiar advantages of that system, his name, in course, was enrolled on the local preachers' plan. He next became a candidate for the itinerancy; and having passed the quarterly and district meetings, he was finally received, and appointed by the Conference to a circuit.

Thus the road to honour and emolument was fairly open before him. But here a difficulty occurred, which appeared to present an impassable barrier in the way of his setting out. It was this:—when he had cast off the dirty tattered garments, which had long and faithfully served him at the workboard, but was not fit for any other service, he had not a change of raiment, nor the means of obtaining one, and his only suit was the worse for wear. Whether this arose from indolence, or sheer inability, I know not;—I merely state the fact. From this dilemma he was, however, relieved, by the liberality of a few friends, who had previously fitted him out as a local preacher. The writer of this was one of those who contributed to supply his necessity; and thus he was equipped with raiment and other necessaries, suited to his circumstances, and to their views of his future destination.

Having already informed the reader what an exalted station this individual, C, is now occupying in the Methodist Connexion, it may, perhaps, by some be deemed superfluous, or considered by others as an act of daring temerity on my part, to say any thing further, either on the subject of his general character, or his pulpit talent. Upon the latter, however, I shall venture to remark, that, as a local preacher, his talents were not near equal to those of his contemporary brethren A and B. I have latterly had opportunities of hearing him, and it is my decided opinion that his pulpit orations are unworthy of being placed in competition with the sermons of those brethren *now*.

This circumstantial detail of facts, will, I think, bring the subject matter in hand fairly before the reader, and it brings me to the point from whence I first set out,—namely,—the perplexing difficulties with which the subject of assumed "*inherent rights*," as exclusively claimed by the travelling preachers, is encumbered. And I conclude, by proposing the following queries. First. How comes it to pass that A. is not deemed worthy of being admitted to the enjoyment of this privilege? Secondly. That B. has been dispossessed of it? And thirdly. That C. is entitled to enjoy it? and from whence does he derive exclusive right or title? Should this matter appear worthy of the attention of your readers, perhaps some of your correspondents may be able to throw a little light upon this intricate subject.

I have been the more particular in noticing the original condition in life, and the temporal circumstances of these three individuals, which may be taken as a pretty fair criterion and sample of those of a great bulk of the Conference preachers, with a view to shew the propriety, or otherwise, of the cuckoo notes perpetually sounding throughout the Connexion, by these men of authority and self-importance, of the "*Alls which they have left!*" and the "*Sacrifices they have made for the sake of Methodism!*" These notes, too, are sometimes (as more befitting) repeated also by their bombastic trumpeters, who are often designedly elevated by these

dignitaries, who, deeply skilled in this science, know full well how to enlist and render even the baser passions of vain-glorious man subservient to their own purpose:—that distinguished elevation being at once both *cause and effect* of such clarion sounds.

The late Mr. S. Bradburn was known to say that “*he had left SEVEN AWLS, and prime ones too!*” But, perhaps, few of his successors, although originally of the same craft, would now make so ingenuous a disclosure; as it is a maxim with them studiously to hide a lowly origin, lest their pretended greatness, and assumed dignity, should not pass so currently with the unsuspecting and deluded strangers amongst whom they sojourn. The caution said to have been given to the noviciate, by the Rev. R. R., one of the “Heads of Houses,” will serve both as an illustration and confirmation of this remark:—that experienced dignitary, jealous, no doubt, for the honour of the brotherhood of the “sacred conclave,” amongst other important instructions given in private to his pupil, who was just appointed to travel as a preacher, gravely cautioned him, “that, in his social intercourse with the friends, he must not appear to know the cause of *smoky houses*, lest he should excite suspicion, and the people should thence be led to make the discovery that he had been a *chimney sweeper!*” Intimating, and evidently fearing, that *all his honour* would thus be laid in the dust! and, no doubt, the *spurious* and the *vile* ought to share that fate. But is this the spirit of *Christianity*, or, the crooked policy of worldly wisdom? I leave the reader to settle this point, by comparing such advice with that of St. Paul, or with the instructions given by the Saviour to his disciples.

I am quite aware that in giving publicity to this plain, unvarnished, statement of facts, the writer is subjecting his remarks to the severe animadversions of those, whose contracted minds are blinded by bigotry, and warped by prejudice; as well as to the anathemas of those, who are especially and personally implicated.

I hope I should be one of the last persons living to cast reflections, however just or true, upon any man, or body of men, whatever may have been their former condition, their foibles, or their faults, provided their conduct is *now* fairly in accordance with the precepts and principles of the Gospel, by which they profess to be governed. But when, in the nervous language of a celebrated divine, “the upstart wretch forgets himself, and spurns the ladder by which he climbed to eminence and distinction,” (and in the case of a Conference preacher, by which he is *still supported*, although he acts as if he had forgotten the important fact,) “and tries to make his upstart greatness bear a mimic resemblance to antique dignity, by aping the viler, not the nobler, qualities of traditional importance:”—when, instead of being the humble, faithful, minister of Christ, and the consistent servant of the Church for his sake, he can so far forget the sacred obligations of Christian duty, as to assume an *absolute Gentile authority*, and with his iron sceptre, fraudulently obtained, the usurper impiously engages in the unhallowed work of devastating the Church, of some of its richest ornaments, and most valuable members; and, under the pretext of “governing the Church for its edification,” he daringly exercises (as this class of men have recently done at Leeds and various other places) this most despotic and irresponsible power, in defiance of law, and utterly opposed to reason and revelation, and subversive of every principle of justice and equity:—then,—to adopt the language of another eminent divine,—“that passive tameness which *silently* submits without a struggle, to every encroachment of the violent and assuming, forms no part of Christian duty, but is destructive to general happiness and order.” Another quotation, applicable to the subject, shall conclude these remarks. “Although there are no specious pretexts, with which hypocrisy and tyranny have not colored their desire of imposing silence on men of discernment; yet there is no virtuous citizen, that can see, in these pretexts, any legitimate reason for remaining silent.”

HELVETEUS.

October, 1831.

#### QUARTERLY MEETING, LIVERPOOL SOUTH CIRCUIT.

##### TO THE EDITORS.

GENTLEMEN,

In furtherance of the great object you have in view, and as a specimen of the manner in which Methodist preachers think proper to treat the

members of our local meetings, when they perceive sentiments to prevail, otherwise than subservient to Conference despotism,—I take leave to furnish you with some facts, which transpired at the quarterly meeting of the Liverpool South Circuit, held in Mount Pleasant Vestry, 29th ult. the Rev. D. M’Nicol in the chair.

The routine business being despatched, a respectable leader and local preacher, of some standing and influence in the circuit, rose, for the purpose of giving expression to his sentiments on the present position of the Connexion, with a view to direct the minds of the members generally, to seek out those hindrances, which stand in the way of its prosperity, and to urge them to use every exertion in their power, to render effectual the various means in operation for recruiting the declining numbers in Society. In the course of his address, he observed, that the September quarterly meeting being the time and place appointed, for the expression of any dissatisfaction with the proceedings of the preceding Conference, he begged to know from the chairman why the Conference had not, in their present minutes, given any explanation of those errors in the numbers of the members in society, which were detected by the editors of the “Circular,” in the minutes for 1830;—and also, why they had, in their present minutes, entered the numbers in this circuit at 60 more than were returned by the superintendent, Mr. Henshaw, in the circuit schedules? (Here the speaker met with various very improper interruptions, particularly from an exceedingly pert young man, lately received into office; who, in his zeal to shew himself worthy of the patronage of the powers that be, seems to forget the respect due to age, piety, and wisdom, in those who differ from him: he is, however, under “surveillance,” and I give him the hint that he may be wary.)

Mr. Hollingworth explained, that the error of 1830 in question, had been noticed on the cover of the Magazine; and with regard to the exaggeration of the numbers in this circuit, he had stated, when questioned on the subject by Mr. Henshaw, that he could not account for it, but referred him to Mr. Beecham, who represented the circuit at the Conference. Mr. B. will no doubt see that his own character is involved in the explanation required. Can it be possible, that the numbers have been *overstated designedly to mask the injurious working of the present system?* Let me hope the contrary until time shall solve the question.

This subject having been disposed of, the member alluded to, continuing his remarks, observed, that one cause of the stagnation of the work in this circuit was, the very injudicious proceeding of breaking up the leaders’ meeting into various sections, meeting in very small numbers at each of the chapels, instead of altogether as formerly; a proceeding which, in his view, destroyed that unity of the brethren, and facility of co-operation, which is so necessary to success: and here he requested the advice of the reverend chairman how the meeting ought to act, so as to procure the re-union of the leaders’ meetings, by which that hindrance to prosperity might be removed.

Mr. M’Nicol replied, that if his advice were to be taken, the brother would cease from his attempt altogether; and let things go on as they now exist; at the same time intimating, that he had his suspicious relative to the course which was being pursued by the speaker, or, to use the elegant phraseology of the reverend gentleman, he “smelled something.”

This reply not being satisfactory (how could it?) to the interrogator, he rejoined, that it was clear to him that our duty was to make diligent inquiry into the causes of the present condition of the society; as it was evident that, with the immense revenue collected, and the vast multitude of good men employed, there must be some weighty reasons why greater results had not followed their labours:—to instance our own town in particular, during ten years labour, with an increase of three travelling and a vast number of local preachers, the numbers were only 10 more than they were in 1821, or, in other words, only one in 12 months! This could not be the case, unless some radical defect had crept in; and he had a right to ask those who were at the head of the society, where that defect existed. The speaker then gave notice that he would, at the next quarterly meeting, move an address to the Conference of 1832, stating his conviction, that the division of the leaders’ meeting had been productive of great mischief to the societies; and praying them to re-unite them into one meeting. He was continuing his remarks, in which an aged and eminently pious leader was waiting on his legs to support him, when the reverend chairman abruptly stopped him, by calling on one of his colleagues to *pray*, and then concluded the meeting! which broke up in confusion.

It is thus, gentlemen, that every well-meant effort on the part of the people is met by our clerical governors; who, it would appear, can appreciate nothing but what emanates from themselves, even when its excellence and importance are most manifest. But that which most disgusted me in this case was, the contempt which was thereby heaped on the meeting, in the person of one of its members. Surely the chairman must have made a large estimate of the patience and forbearance of those present.

As, however, this is Mr. M’Nicol’s first attempt to act in an arbitrary and tyrannical manner, at least in this circuit, I forbear further to remark upon it; but shall observe his future conduct; and, with your assistance, fearlessly expose it, when he so manifestly oversteps the line of propriety.

I am, gentlemen,

Yours, &c.

Liverpool, 10th October, 1831.

W. B.

## PLYMOUTH.

## TO THE EDITORS OF THE CIRCULAR.

GENTLEMEN,

I have always admired Mr. Wesley's candour in recommending his followers to examine all he said; to try his exposition of doctrine and practice by the word of God and reason. Of what value is the experience or creed of that man who is destitute of decision of character? For, without the habit of deciding for himself, he will never have any fixed principles, at least, he will have none which may be called his own. His opinions and principles will be mere prejudices,—a term, I apprehend, applicable to every idea admitted without the previous scrutiny of the judgment. "The term prejudice may apply to any sentiment, whether true or false, which has been received into the mind without thought, reflection, inquiry."

The perusal of your independent publication has convinced me, gentlemen, that your object is, to promote candid inquiry into ecclesiastical matters; and more especially, into those matters with which Methodism, Wesleyan Methodism, is more intimately blended. I believe that you are inquiring after truth. A noble object this, certainly; worthy the pursuit of minds of the highest order. For the capability of receiving truth, perhaps you will permit me to observe, there must be always certain preparations. I do not reckon freedom from error one of these; for then, truth would be absolutely unattainable; no man being without false opinions, who has not already imbibed true ones. I am not speaking now on the subject of Christian perfection, or challenging a member of the Methodist Conference to gratify my eyes with a living model. But I mean certain qualities, moral and intellectual; which bestow a fitness to be acted upon by argument. One of the most essential of these, is, the fair, honest, desire of discovering the truth, and following whithersoever it may lead. Alas! how large a portion of mankind is precluded from this state, by previously determined interests and partialities!

It is then admitted, that there is such a thing as truth; and that it is attainable by openness to conviction,—by the emancipation of the mind from the dominion of appetite or passion, the tyranny of custom, the yoke of authority,—and, above all, by patient, unremitting research, which should never be relaxed, and should know no limits but the discovery of the truth. I am aware that the opinions of many vary as they hear one preacher after another, or, turn from one author to another.—The present argument always seems the most plausible to superficial minds; and this, perhaps, applies in a greater degree to the man who worships in a chapel than to a member of the established church.

I have been led to pen these remarks, by the spirited observations which you have offered on the present state, I might say, the degraded state of the Methodist Connexion in this country. I was not aware, until I read your work, that the same system of concealing what ought to be known,—of glossing over plain facts,—of denying the people's right to peruse any publication which did not pass through the hands of their spiritual guides,—of denouncing those who presume to think for themselves, not merely in their creed, but in the affairs of church government,—of dunning the leaders and others to augment their weekly and quarterly contributions,—was pursued in your northern circuits to the extent, the galling extent, to which we have been exposed for many years,—I might say, for upwards of thirty years:—for, it appears very strange, but it is no less true, that very soon after the plan of pacification was drawn up and promulgated, the preachers that have reached this part of the Methodist vineyard, have seldom missed an opportunity of impressing upon our minds, *that power belongs only unto them, and to provide the ways and means belong only unto us.*

If this communication, gentlemen, should suit your pages, I intend to divulge some plain facts, in reference to our preachers' mismanagement in this, and in the adjoining circuits;—facts, which ought to have been

brought to light long since. If I have formed a right estimate of our present superintendent's (Mr. Burdsall) character, he will not let his wrath rest upon me, nor put me out of the synagogue, for telling my mind a bit on such things appertaining to our society, as require the correcting hand of the press. And to be plain, I do not think that any other weapon will have the least effect in bringing our guides to their senses, and in restoring to us our long lost rights.

Experience has taught me that only one class of persons is adapted to hold financial appointments in our community. No man is fit to fill the office of circuit-steward, for instance, unless he is prepared to go with his preacher to any length:—whether in providing for them,—in defending and voting for them,—in apologizing for their expenditure,—in excusing their neglect, &c.; and, after a man has made his best feelings bend to the interest of his patrons, he will frequently meet with but a poor return. If he object but to one jot of their conduct, he will probably be made to suffer for his temerity. Many of my brethren in this circuit will feel the force of this remark, and recognise its application to what has passed under our notice, since our new chapel has been built; and on many occasions prior to this period.

It is somewhat singular that two preachers, previous to our present appointment, should have come from your great town. This circumstance was not favourable to our prosperity, because you are in the habit of indulging your ministers with such fine things that cost you about £300 per annum for each. This style is not at all adapted to our peace establishment in this town. During the war, we were differently supplied, and hence we raised the preachers' board,—provided them with fine houses, furniture, and other allowances, in a way that we cannot afford now. The consequence is, that we are compelled to tell them, that we must retrench, or we shall certainly be in the Gazette ere long.

Our last superintendent, Mr. Robert Martin, was a worthy hibernian, possessing much suavity of manners, and tact in managing affairs; but still our friends thought that, as we were going to leeward, it would be expedient to part with him at the end of his second year. When things reach this crisis, there is generally a good deal of manoeuvring in the camp. I could, Messrs. Editors, afford you, and your readers, a tolerable share of amusement by relating what was said and done on this occurrence; suffice it, however, to observe, that our preachers were willing, at length, to go away, rather than be badgered, as Mr. Usher had been, particularly by our Stone-house brethren; but when it came to this, *behold! there were no funds to pay for the removal!* The steward would make no advance, the members would not subscribe. Thus, in a sulky fit of indifference, we bore our burden another year. The consequence has been, that we are getting deeper and deeper in debt.

At our last quarter day, we had another dressing on our want of liberality. We were told that we must bestir ourselves, that we must increase our contributions, that the leaders must shew an example of munificence to their members, and, in short, to cram their heads with arguments to induce the people to come forward to support their preachers according to their rank in life. Some, however, were so soft as to hint that the people's means should be consulted, that the times required retrenchment, that a man should be just before he be generous, that the business of Methodist preachers is to *save souls*, that by thus harassing our feelings at each quarter day, on money matters, *souls are destroyed*, that it becomes us "to receive what they are *willing* to give," according to Mr. Wesley's original compact with his societies, and that this must remain in force until the Conference, in its plenitude of wisdom and assumed power, think proper to abrogate this obsolete and foolish covenant from our code of laws for ever.

Really, Gentlemen, Methodist affairs have assumed such variety of shapes within my recollection, that I can hardly bring myself to think that Methodism is the same thing now that it was thirty or forty years back. I hope you will excuse my dealing in a little irony sometimes, for sure it is, that

such doctrines are broached at our meetings as may produce some irony, even from a dull head like mine. I invariably try to put the best face upon every thing, and to stifle my feelings, like my fellow members; but, I do assure you, that at our last quarter day, it would have been "impious to be calm." Hence our highly respected brother, W. S. gave vent to his feelings of generous indignation at certain proceedings touching our funds, that almost ended in his withdrawal from us. Many felt with him, and protested against our outlay of money, and thereby increasing our debt. Is it not astonishing that we should be incurring debt to fill the coffers of Conference? that is, why should we send cash to this or that managing committee, (about whom we are not allowed inquiry,) to meet certain demands which appear right to them? Would it not be better, considering our means, to expend our pence in our own circuit? This plan would prevent us from sinking into debt, and establish goodwill in our borders. Unless this "bill of reform" better our condition in Plymouth, I am persuaded that our superintendent will have some difficulty in keeping us in good humour, between this and his final benediction.

Perhaps you will imagine that I am now alluding to his precipitate retreat from Glasgow a few years since: the comparison will not hold good, because he was sent among the Scotch, armed with special authority, to bend them to the yoke of Conference. But this, he found, was no easy task; "the people would not yet submit" to the despotism of their rulers. The consequence was, that Mr. Burdsall was compelled to fly, without pecuniary supply, to tell Messrs. B & Co., who constitute the "legal Conference," that as Mr. V. W. had got himself and his brethren into the mire beyond the Tweed, (after he had expended between 20 and £30,000 of English money, of which sum we have actually been dunned), he must get himself out of it as well as he could.

I need not tell you, Gentlemen, for you appear to me to know every thing, (as I shall make it appear by and by) that when a man is employed by a faction, whether in Church or State, to do any dirty work, whether he succeed or not, provided he does all that he is bid, is sure of his reward,—he has a fair prospect of promotion. Thus has our respected friend Mr. B. been rewarded, by being allowed to exercise his talent, for several years, at the elbow of the Methodist commander-in-chief, and had the distinguished honour of recording his name among the worthies who assembled at Leeds in 1824, to exercise an unconstitutional act, which will ever be a blot in the annals of Methodism.

Lest, however, your readers should imagine that I am more a censor than a patriot, I will furnish you with a few instances of redeeming qualities in our superintendent that deserve to be recorded in your pages. I do believe that he is, notwithstanding the part he is compelled to perform, as a member of the Conference, a man who dislikes monopoly, and duplicity, and worldly honours. To illustrate this affirmation, take the following instances of his plain dealing towards his brethren: I was told the other day, and I can depend on my informant's word, that at a Conference held in Manchester or Liverpool, he had the manliness to tax his brethren with innovation, with the assumption of worldly honours, and mimicking, by shovel hats and other paraphernalia, the clergy of the establishment; and, above all other absurdities, in directly violating their own rules and Mr. Wesley's positive forbiddance, in claiming from the people the title of REVEREND. I assure you, gentlemen, the round preacher was very faithful with his brethren; he told them what you have often told in the pages of the "Circular," that if they do not repent and do their first work, become labourers in Christ's vineyard, and not titled bishops, lording it over God's heritage, there would be no prosperity in our societies. He protested against their extravagance and their vanity; the term *Reverend*, he observed, implied too much to be given to a mere creature, and that of God only it may be said with propriety—"Holy and reverend is his name." —Psalm 118, 4.

It may seem trifling to some to notice these things, but as your journal is a work for correction, as well as for information, circumstances insignificant in themselves, have more influence in the world than many suppose; "Men are but children of a larger growth." It has been observed that the world is ruled by names, and experience shews that there is much truth in the remark. Our Lord, who "did and taught," did not think the subject too insignificant to speak on; he once and again notices the dress of the scribes and pharisees; "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the border of their garments; they desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets." Connected with their dress, he mentions their love of titles, and forbids his disciples to receive such; "Be not ye called *Rabbi*." To say that the title of *Reverend* is a matter of no consequence, is to charge this precept with being too trifling to be observed; and to assume or receive that or any similar import, is a direct violation of its spirit and purpose. It is very obvious that in this passage the Lord Jesus expressly prohibits the use of all honorary, exclusive titles of distinction in his kingdom, as entirely incompatible with its nature. They have a tendency not only to puff up those on whom they are conferred, but also to create a false respect and veneration in the minds of others; and they introduce a worldly influence, destructive as far as it goes, of christian principle.

I was astonished when I read in your number for August, that some kind of legerdemain had been practised at the last Bristol Conference, to make the return of members exhibit an apparent increase, when, in fact, there

was a decrease, as you had predicted. It certainly does appear passing strange, that such information should reach you while Conference was still sitting. I cannot help suspecting that you have a few *reverend* correspondents to send you information from the seat of our Methodist government; be that as it may, I can affirm now, on the authority of Mr. — that your information was perfectly accurate.

As this preacher dislikes duplicity and any thing like false colours, he has communicated the important truth that, on the returns from the various circuits being added up, there was found to be a decrease in the number of members in our connexion; what was to be done? We dare not let these returns go before the public, was the spontaneous admission of some; let us put the best patch upon it, said another; we are bound, as true masons, to keep the secret; we will add to our returns a certain number of those who are *on trial*, and thus make up our actual deficiency, and exhibit a small increase. That this *farce* was acted at Bristol, is a fact which cannot be denied; and that it has been stated by the preacher alluded to, in the most explicit manner, is well known to us in this town. But the question is, are persons on *trial* deemed eligible to answer such a purpose? The answer is, and I have it from authority, *they are not, because they are on trial, and not members*: it has not been done before. It was a feint to conceal the nakedness of the land, and by the employment of falsification, to endeavour to shew that your prediction, as well as your reasonings and conclusions in reference to the present mode of administering Methodist laws, were erroneous. Now, however, the truth is come out, the sophistry of the managers is exposed, and your position is more firmly established than ever. I have to return you my thanks for your masterly exposure of the fallacy contained in question 26, and the answer thereto in the last minutes of Conference: it is a complete juggl.

The question and answer is, as you observe, "undoubtedly inserted with the view of inducing a belief in the members of the connexion, that the numbers have not in the last year been properly returned; so, that the exhibited increase does not shew the actual state of the case." What delusion! This is imposing on our credulity with a vengeance.

I agree with you, gentlemen, that none of your readers "will suffer their eyesight to be dimmed by any such "dust." I do not mean to compliment you when I say, that I believe more good would result to the Methodist body if the preachers were to read, from their pulpits, your leading article for last September, than anything that they have disseminated since the fatal day, when they announced that they had broken up the respectable and lovely society at Leeds.

The Circular has been read by a few in this neighbourhood ever since the first number came down in January 1830, and I have often intended to contribute my humble mite to its pages. I therefore take leave to repeat what I said at the beginning of this epistle,—that I view your labour to be a legitimate one,—that your object appears to be, to do away what is wrong and to establish what is right, both among our preachers and people; and, to use your words in your first admirable address, "to excite all to discharge every duty incumbent on them, whether as officers or private members, in the fear of God, and *without fear of man*."

If my mode of thinking and writing is deemed suitable to your periodical, the continuance of which is much desired in this part of the kingdom by a few who claim the liberty to think for themselves, as free agents, you shall hear again from

Gentlemen,  
Your friend and well-wisher,  
CITIZEN.

Plymouth, October, 1831.

\* We omit the name supplied by our Correspondent.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"TERTIUS'" second letter to the President of Conference, on the cause of the low state of its funds, &c. shall appear if possible in our next.

We omitted last month to say that "S. T's" communication, although exceedingly well written, being purely on points of doctrine, with which we have no controversy, was declined as unsuitable to our work.

The late Mr Bramwell's letter, which we promised insertion this month, is unavoidably postponed, as is also the "Portrait of a Christian Pastor."

"Omega" dated Seacombe, "J. L." of London, and "Alpha" of Birmingham, are received.

"O. P. Q." is unsuitable for our pages.

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